

you grow up and you lose touch

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by [scarlett_starlett](#)

Summary

Peter always thought that when he had kids, there would be someone by his side.

Instead, he has a mouthy mercenary acting as a chef every night for him and his newly adopted son and a narcissistic billionaire philanthropist paying child support on the sly. But Peter figures it isn't all bad, especially when Miles loses that dullness in his eyes whenever Wade slips on the banana peels he 'strategically' places all over the apartment for Peter as a joke.

Notes

I took some liberties with this fic by including both movie-verse and comic-verse details. I wrote it so it isn't confusing to anyone just tuning in but if anyone is still confused at the end or curious, just drop a comment and I'll respond as soon as I can! Other than that, I really hope you enjoy dad!Peter and mutually pining idiots.

How it Starts

Peter tries not to think about how they're a fragment in a multiverse, about how there are alternate realities where Gwen was still *alive*—where M.J. didn't press white-knuckled fists to her clenched teeth and make him choose between the world or her—where Peter could save New York and have what he wanted.

Those were thoughts for early dawn on a school night, when he couldn't sleep because he could feel hands around his neck too easily, feel the scorch of bullets, grenades, *fists* against his skin. Only then would he let himself think—huh, *fuck*, he sure drew the short end of the stick if there existed a universe where Peter Parker wasn't just dirt-poor, but he also had the girl.

Or guy.

A good friend?

The Avengers *acknowledgement* at the very least?

At least Daredevil sometimes sought him out for team-ups; there were worse things in the world than teaming-up with Hell's Kitchen most righteous vigilante, he's sure.

Like *fraternizing* with the enemy.

Kissing them, to be specific. Not that Peter couldn't lie his way out of *that* one if he had to but, again, one crisis at a time.

One crisis per night is his M.O. nowadays.

So on those nights, when his bruised ribs throbbed in tandem with his heart, when he glanced over the empty side of his bed and pretended he didn't feel alone, when he purposely didn't look at the face-down picture frame of him and M.J. on his bookcase—of *Gwen* with her golden blonde locks, bright grin, sparkling blue eyes—

He knows: there are universes like that, where he has everything.

This isn't one of them.

(But maybe it can be.)

i.

Peter *promises* that he has better days than this—really, he actually has good days where everything goes right and he makes it home *just* in time to watch his favorite television show and he doesn't even have to break out the hydrocodone because he has *no* injuries.

The way today starts off, Peter knows it's not going to be a good day.

No day can be good if it's Daredevil doing a house call.

“Hello? Uh, hey, is there any chance that this can wait? I'ma—*little busy right now!*” Peter grunts, pulling a thread of his modified webs between his hands with all his strength. He'd been having

some trouble with his webs recently and since his evening grad class was cancelled, he figured he could at least work on his new prototype instead of slouching around uselessly.

“Spider-Man,” Daredevil greets, curt as always. Peter pauses, surprised. *“We need to talk. It’s urgent.”*

“Y’not breaking up with me already, are you, DD? You were—the one *that*—suggested we take it *slow*,” Peter grits out distractedly, watching the threads of his webs begin to fray. He hitches the phone higher up his shoulder. Shit, this wouldn’t do at all. Peter knows he’s very strong, could hold his own against Captain America if he really tried, but he sure as hell has the scars to prove just how strong the Rhino could be when he set his mind to something. He needed to reinforce these *stupid* webs with something stronger, but nothing he’s done so far has worked.

God, what would *Gwen do—ah, no, don’t go there Parker, that way lies hell*, Peter reminds himself sharply.

“Very funny, Spider-Man. Ten minutes. I’ll meet you on your turf,” and he hangs up just as Peter’s web tears and his bare foot slips on the cheap mat in his bedroom.

“OW! Dang it,” Peter groans, rubbing his tailbone and holding a frayed end of his web in one hand. “Not strong enough,” he sighs, tossing it away. “Formula needs more tweaking...and I need more money to pay for those tweaks. So there’s gonna be no tweaks until I get paid next week. Awesome.”

But first things first, he needs to find a suit that didn’t smell like something died in it.

“Tony Stark is looking for you,” Daredevil says the instant Peter swings to a landing in front of him. Daredevil stands under the shadow of a billboard, the dark red of his suit gleaming ominously under the moonlight. His arms are crossed over his broad chest and Peter can’t help the slight way he grabs at his own arm at the sight of Daredevil’s sculpted biceps. He idly thinks that he should ask him what his training regimen is for...*training reasons*, of course, yeah, although Daredevil works the lean, tightly muscled, athlete look pretty well even though Peter is honestly more into the bigger, burly, types...

“That’s new, what’s he want?” Peter says, stopping that train of thought before he embarrasses himself. “Tips on how to be a decent human being? I can refer him to some people I know.”

Daredevil’s lip ticks up the slightest bit. “I wouldn’t know, but he did say that it was urgent. He wouldn’t contact me otherwise,” Daredevil continues. Peter will take what he can. “He told me he’d rather not take drastic measures to find you and, I don’t know about you, but I *don’t* like playing messenger when you and I both know Stark can find you in a heartbeat. If he’s going out of his way like this, it can’t be good,” he adds, meaningfully.

“Great, right, sorry,” Peter mutters with a wince, looking off to the side. He can’t think of a single reason why Tony Stark would want to contact him in such a way unless shit hit the fan and he was running out of options. Good to know he’d always be a reserve superhero, Peter thinks a little bitterly. “I guess I can swing by the Tower later.”

“He wants you there now.”

“Now?”

“Yes, why *else* would I call you outside of Hell’s Kitchen for?”

“I dunno’—to hang out? Beat up some bad guys together? Sing some off-key renditions of Lady Gaga’s new hit single while beating up said bad guys?”

“Lady Gaga hasn’t released...nevermind,” Daredevil clears his throat. Peter smirks, wishing he didn’t have his mask on so the older man could see it. But he’s sure the devil-masked vigilante can feel his smugness. Daredevil listens to Lady Gaga. Small pleasures. “Stark wants you there *now*. I’m not sure for what, but he sounded quite...distressed over the phone. I’d get there as soon as possible if I were you.”

“Well, he’s never gone out of his way to find me before, especially like this,” Peter mentions, already eying a building. “Better get going, then.”

“Good luck, Spider-Man,” Daredevil nods, blending back into the dark while Peter leaps off the building with a quick wave, shooting a web to a nearby wall and swinging himself through the streets of Brooklyn with a troubled frown. It wasn’t like he was lying when he said that Tony never sought him out; he really *didn’t*, not unless he needed to use him for something and he’d exhausted all other resources. Tony was a tool that way, but at least he was honest, which Peter appreciated.

His trip to the Tower is uneventful, but long—no thieves, no muggers, nothing but dead streets and the occasional passerby—and when he finally lands on the roof of Stark Tower, searching for that nook he always shimmied through because JARVIS’ scanners couldn’t reach there, a figure emerged from the shadows, the familiar outline of arrows setting off his spidey-sense.

“Hawkeye,” Peter greets, blinking. “This is new, and also really, really creepy. What’s with the welcoming party?”

“Oh, y’know,” Hawkeye shrugs nonchalantly, nodding his head to the roof door of the Tower. “Just here to let you in on a few things before you talk to Tony. He doesn’t want you freaking out and scaring the kid.”

“Kid? Freaking out? Rewind, I feel like I missed something.”

“Right. So, don’t freak out, *but*... how okay would you be with fostering the successor of Spider-Man from another universe?”

“How okay would I—wait—*WHAT?!?*”

“So, that’s a maybe, right?” Hawkeye grins, heading down the stairs. “That *definitely* sounded like a maybe.”

Peter’s pretty grateful for his heightened abilities right now—he would have *totally* broken his nose or something if he hadn’t caught himself on the wall after Hawkeye dropped that bomb.

Ungraceful, thy name is Peter.

“What’re you—are you crazy?!” Peter shouts as he scrambles to follow the archer. “That’s a *hell no*, Hawkeye!”

“I told you to call me Clint, kid. Hawkeye is my work name,” Hawkeye says but Peter has bigger issues. Like the fact that Tony wants to dump a kid on him.

“*Hawkeye*,” Peter stresses, just to be a shit. Hawkeye just scowls. “Being a hero doesn’t pay, y’know! I survived off ramen noodles for a whole week once because I stopped Doc Oct and

couldn't go to work! So I got *fired*," Peter hisses, but doesn't mention that Jameson was *always* firing him and then calling him up when he didn't show the next morning because he didn't *actually* fire him. "How the heck am I going to take care of a kid when I can barely take care of myself?"

"Don't worry about it! Hey, has anyone ever told you that you're really paranoid? Money isn't a problem. Tony's got you covered," Hawkeye waves off. "Think of him as your over-paid, overseas, distant husband—who's *really* bad with kids. Like, really bad."

Peter slits his eyes. He didn't *care* if Hawkeye couldn't see it; he was *totally* giving him the evil eye. "That is *not funny*! There is no way I'm accepting charity from Tony Stark!"

He cannot believe he's accepting charity from Tony 'this-is-your-responsibility-as-Spider-Man-I'm-a-guilt-tripping-jerk' Stark.

"Listen," Tony insists, ignoring Peter's fuming. "You take the kid in, show 'em how to stop sticking to everything, maybe teach him a new trick or two, and I make sure you two eat for the next six months, how's that sound? Wonderful? That's what I thought, too," Tony grins, ignoring Peter's incredulous flailing at just how *horrible* this idea is and Peter hasn't even gotten to the *he's never taken care of a kid before* part of the argument.

"No, not wonderful! Bad! Super bad! I can't just take him in like this, Mr. Stark, he's..." Peter grips the file that Tony compiled in his hand tightly. "He's just a *child*! He needs a family, he needs support!"

"He *needs* a mentor," Tony corrects. "Someone who *knows* what it's like to suddenly come into powers and teach him how to use them properly. *Safely*," Tony adds, and Peter knows there's a story there but he can't even begin to ask about it when he's suddenly come into a *kid*.

"And call me Tony. Mr. Stark was my father."

Peter snaps his jaw shut, squares his shoulders. "Fine, *Mr. Tony Stark*."

Hawkeye sniggers in the background. Miles, who's curled up on a couch in a living room that's blocked off by a glass, sound-proof, wall, just watches them all fearfully.

Tony scowls, but doesn't interrupt again since Peter keeps talking:

"Let's say he does need a mentor, someone to teach him how to use his powers. That takes *time* and *patience* with *resources* that I don't have. *How* am I going to patrol at night if he's in my care? At his age, there's no way I can take him with me without putting him in more danger than a kid his age should be in! In fact, he shouldn't be out fighting crime *at all*! And if no one can know his identity, who's going to babysit him when I can't?"

"Find some grandma type! I don't know! It's not like *no one* can know his identity, it's just that no one who *matters* can know."

Peter pinches the bridge of his nose. "*Okay*, but that doesn't fix the first part of the argument! He is *nine*. He can't be fighting crime! He's just a kid, he'll get hurt!"

"Not to worry. Already got that covered," Tony smirks, snapping his fingers. "JARVIS. Show him

the suit.”

“Of course, sir,” JARVIS responds politely.

“Suit? *You built a nine-year-old a super suit?!?*”

“Hell yes I did,” Tony preens. “Some of my best work this week, really.”

Suddenly, the whole right facing wall shifts down to reveal a—pretty *awesome* looking shrunk-down Spider-Man suit, black where Peter’s would be blue and red. The sigil at the center of the chest is titanium, gleaming red and meaningful under the florescent lights, and the rest of the suit gleams unusually—definitely not spandex, probably some type of more functional and resistant material than Peter’s suit, knowing Tony. It’s probably fire retardant, too. Small fortunes, Peter thinks warily. It’s fitted for Miles and seems to be constructed by the best tech available, Peter is sure, but he still feels his stomach cave at the significance of the suit.

“And—you see *absolutely* no problem with letting a nine-year-old fight crime?” Peter asks, flatly.

“Told you he was really bad with kids,” Hawkeye hollers from the kitchen, popping open a bag of chips.

“Shut up, Katniss. Now, *before* you tell me how bad of an idea this is, let me run down some specs!” Tony holds up a finger at Peter. “This suit is nearly indestructible. *Nearly* meaning it’d take one *my own* tech to destroy it which is never going to happen.”

“Right,” Peter crosses his arms, unimpressed.

“Right,” Tony repeats, ignoring Peter’s look of disbelief. “First, the armor is made of protein-scale nanotechnology, which will grant Miles enhanced strength *on top* of Miles’ already-impressive spider strength, with the added bonus of durability. This suit can take a beating from your *Rhino* and still be fine,” Tony mocks. Peter slits his eyes. The Rhino *was* a threat when he was angry, okay? “The suit also functions as a glider in case Miles ever, I don’t know, misses a building and falls. I added a type of pseudo-webbing—*biodegradable*, for those environmentalists out there—to the arms which would allow for controlled gliding in situations that call for it. They deploy automatically when the sensors detect dangerous altitude.”

“He can *fly in it?!?*”

Tony lifts a finger, smirk growing. “I’m not even done yet. The suit also includes a self-cleaning electrostatic precipitation system which allows for full Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Filtration and has 10 minutes’ worth of compressed air capacity should the kid ever fall into water or something because I’m guessing he can’t swim,” Tony swivels to face Miles, who’s staring at them with wide eyes and furrowed brows. He snaps his fingers and then says, “Hey, kid, can you swim?”

Miles shakes his head.

Tony snaps his fingers again, blocking out sound.

At least Tony was thoughtful enough not to let Miles hear the adults *argue over his fate*, Peter thinks with a sigh.

“Thought so. The headpiece also contains enhanced lenses, similar to my suit, from which Miles can access police and fire scanners and some of the other fun goodies—*when he’s old enough*,” Tony assures. “I’ve added a child lock device which only *you* can access, it’s programmed to your

voice and you can add a retina scan for extra protection once Miles is older. So you can restrict and grant access to any of the more dangerous settings in his suit as you deem necessary. And don't even *get me started* on the 17 *multifunctional* layers that I built into the suit."

"17?" Peter repeats, baffled. Let no one ever say that Tony didn't put his heart into his machines. "What, Mr. Stark, that's...this is all..." Peter tries to speak but Tony steamrolls over him. This is insane; Tony didn't just build Miles a suit, he built him a *fortress*.

"*And* the suit is also heat resistant. So, don't worry your fuzzy little arachnid head, the kid will be more than fine if you take him out on your daily runs in the city. He can even upload his own music for extra dramatic crime fighting," he adds, and Peter wants to believe he's kidding but, unfortunately, he knows better.

Peter purses his lips. "Okay. So that *is* a pretty bad-ass suit."

"Thank you, I made it myself."

Peter ignores him. "Even so, Mr. Stark, you have to understand just how bad of an idea this is. He's just nine-years-old and he's gone through something horrendously traumatizing—and it hasn't even been a full week. He needs time to process, to cope. I don't think he needs a reminder of what it was that put him in that situation in the first place..." Peter trails off, glancing down at the file again. He flips through it again, his heart clenching painfully with every word he reads.

Miles Morales is *young*, much younger than he could have anticipated, and he can't imagine the trauma that small child went through when he gained his spider abilities and he was subsequently *exploited* because of them by his uncle, his *father*. Peter was sixteen when he was bitten by a radioactive spider and he nearly gouged his eyes out in that train car when he was acclimating to his heightened senses. Hearing was always a bitch to get used to. But this kid—*Miles*, Peter thinks firmly, *his name is Miles Morales and his family is...dead*—Peter can tell he isn't happy with his abilities at all. He seems so frightened, curled up into himself on one of Tony's leather couches, staring at him with eyes so wide he can see the whites all around. His dark skin had gone chalky when Tony revealed the suit and Peter knows that his costume isn't helping matters. Actually, hold up, didn't the Spider-Man from that universe die—? *Ah, nope, that way lies hell, too, Parker*, Peter thinks as he looks back up.

"Mr. Stark..."

"Look. Give the kid a chance. He doesn't have many other options right now, alright? Trust me, I've tried," Tony says, heaving a sigh. "Besides, isn't this what *heroes* do?"

This is what heroes do: they give those who've done wrong, those who others wouldn't bat an eye at, a second chance so long as they still had even a pinprick of good in them.

At least, that's Peter's hero ethic.

"Alright, bring the wall up or—how do I get over—right, uh," Peter fumbles when Tony merely arches a brow and the glass wall sinks back into the floor. "So. Miles?" Peter faces the little boy who huddles on the white leather couch, approaching him cautiously. "Uh, hey, buddy. I'm Spider-Man or, er, this universe's Spider-Man, I guess."

In the background, Hawkeye snorts.

Peter calls upon all the patience he has so he doesn't web that bird-brains mouth shut.

"So, Mr. Stark tells me that you're nine-years-old," Peter softens his voice, kneeling in front of

Miles. The mask, Peter notes, freaks him out a little but he can't remove it while he's in the Tower. Even though Peter's 99.9% sure that Tony knows exactly who he is because Tony just can't *stand* not knowing something, he isn't about to willingly show his face to him or anyone else unless it was absolutely necessary. "Did you just turn nine?"

Miles hesitates before he shakes his head.

"Oh, so you've been nine a while now, huh? Neat," Peter smiles. "I've been my age for a while, too."

"...How long?" Miles whispers after a moment, still holding himself tightly.

"Ah! Now that's for me to know and you to find out!" Peter waggles a finger. He leans in a little closer, careful never to make Miles anymore uncomfortable than he already is. Miles tenses but doesn't pull away. "But between you and me, I am *definitely* waaaay younger than that misanthrope over there!"

"I resent that," Tony remarks idly.

"What's that?"

"People hater," Peter clarifies. "Fits him, doesn't it? He's always been a little too chummy with his robots," and Miles glances quickly over at Tony before looking back down at his knees. "But, hey, so, Mr. Stark says you're gonna' be staying with me for a little bit. I know it's hard right now," he says compassionately, and Miles shrinks. "But I'm going to give you a choice, okay? I know we don't know each other very well, but I'd like it if you stayed with me while you adapt to this universe and learn about your new powers and how to use them. How's that sound?"

Miles shifts uncomfortably, not saying a word.

"I have a Netflix account," Peter coaxes.

Miles darts his eyes back to Peter and he uncurls a little at that. "...You have a computer?"

"I've got two," Peter says, holding up two fingers. "And a PS4. And a bunch of video games I'll probably never play but I still bought because I have no self-control that way."

"Mom said..." Miles begins, stops, drops his eyes and his entire spirit with those two words. Peter's chest tightens—*no, no, don't think about it, don't think about how desperately alone Miles must be*—so he takes a breath and waits for Miles to collect himself, to croak out, "It costs a lot, s'all. We never had it but my...my friend did, we used to watch movies sometimes..."

Peter knew *he* was poor, but even he could shell out eight bucks a month for an online service, so he can't imagine what situation this kid was in before his entire world was destroyed—his friends, his family, his *mother*—

"Well, you can have it all to yourself *and* I'll even let you pick out the snacks if you decide to keep me company for a few weeks?"

Peter doesn't need anyone to tell him it'll be more than *a few weeks*. Six months? Peter's sure Tony was just talking out of his ass, there was no way Miles could be traded off to a *normal* family anymore. Not with his powers, and Peter thinks that Miles knows this, too, which makes things about a hundred times worse because a kid his age shouldn't have to know things like that.

Miles's entire universe collapsed, his world is gone, everything and everyone he knows is gone and

different; this *world* is new and different. Miles dropped down from the sky and if it weren't for his superhuman abilities and healing factor, he'd have *much more* than the slight bruises on his side and cheek that have already faded.

"So?" Peter smiles. "What do you say? Partners?" He holds up his fist.

Miles fidgets for a moment, nervously flicking his gaze to every person in the room before those two wide eyes land on Peter's again. He tentatively lifts his arm, small hand curled in a fist—*oh, god, how is he going to train someone so small?*—and bumps Peter's.

"Okay."

"Awesome!" Hawkeye claps his hands, and the moment is shattered. "I'll go get his stuff from his room. Hey, Miles, you wanna' come with?" Hawkeye calls out, walking over with a friendly smile on his face. Miles tenses, but glances at Peter for permission, and Peter is so screwed; he can totally feel himself getting attached to the little kid already.

"Go get your stuff, I'll wait for you here," Peter assures. Miles quietly uncurls himself and follows Hawkeye down the hall. Before the automatic doors close, Miles glances over his shoulder to look at Peter.

"Crap," Peter sighs, rubbing the back of his neck. "Fine. I'll do it. You win. Gloat and I'll web your mouth shut."

Tony grins victoriously but mines zipping his mouth shut, absently swirling ice in his glass as they descend into a short silence.

"So, you're totally sure about this, right?" Tony asks after a moment. "Not gonna' freak out in a week and demand I take the kid back?"

"No, I'm in it for the long-run," Peter promises and it's really the greatest irony of his life that he's *always* in it for the long-run but others never are. But it's not like he can say *no* to the kid; that's just cruel. Even Peter will sacrifice some take-out nights if it means giving a child some refuge. Although, if Tony doesn't back out of his promise (which he won't because he has more money than he can spend in four lifetimes), he'll be having *more* take-out nights over the next few months. He's so glad his patrols keep him in shape. "And besides, I'm pretty sure you know about the whole, uh, y'know—" Peter awkwardly gestures to his masked face. "I would appreciate it if you never told anyone. Ever. On pain of death."

"Sure thing, kid. Not like I have you on file or anything."

"*Right*, and I was born yesterday."

"Worth a shot, *Parker*," Tony smirks and Peter slits his eyes at him.

"Not funny."

"It's a *little* funny. C'mon, are you *really* even trying here? Let's be honest. How *else* would a photographer capture such epic wide-shots of Spider-Man unless he was taking them himself? Always knew there was something fishy about that. You always got his good angles—not even my personal photographer gets my good angles all the time."

"Mr. Stark, *seriously*? Not cool, okay? I didn't want anyone to know and it's bad enough *you* know," Peter ignores Tony's whiny *hey* in favor of having a small freak out, "but if other people find out it could endanger my loved ones—or-or if SHIELD contacts me for *any reason*

whatsoever, I'm gonna' know it's because of you and I will *not* be happy," Peter hisses, posture rigid all of a sudden. "I do not want anything to do with SHIELD *or* the Avengers, since they operate alongside them. I've seen too many lives get screwed over because SHIELD felt it was imperative to throw them under the bus for their own agendas. I'm not kidding, *Tony*, don't try me on this."

Tony snorts, amused. "Oh, right, because someone who sells their selfies to the press is *obviously* a threat. Practically *quaking* in my titanium boots here, Parker."

"No, but someone who knows about that glitch in JARVIS' system files *is* a threat," Peter snaps and the room grows six degrees colder.

"...Pardon?"

"You're not the only one with computer experience, and I'll be checking in to see if you've fixed that irregularity."

Tony makes a contemplative noise in his throat. "And, ah, who the hell *really* let you in on that little secret, huh, Parker? Not that anyone but me and maybe two other people know about that. I'd be *very* interested in knowing what you said to either of them to make 'em squeal."

Peter ignores the threat in his tone. "No one. I didn't threaten anyone. I didn't *need* to and, even then, that's not my style. I'm not the only one with enough skill to hack into your systems—!"

"*No one* has enough skill to hack into my systems. Except, apparently, *you*," Tony interrupts but Peter talks over him. "So pardon me for thinking you're full of—!"

"—but *I am* one of the few who will never use those skills against you."

"Yeah? So, let's say I believed you. Say you *did* know how to hack into my servers, say you figured it out in your little nerd cave or whatever," Tony sneers, but there's a strain in his voice, a tension that makes Peter's spider sense go off. "How, *exactly*, do I know you won't decide I screwed the proverbial pooch one of these days and you go looking for something you shouldn't?" His knuckles are white around his glass of scotch.

"You already have leverage," Peter says simply, and Tony surveys him for a moment before taking a drink. They both have a vulnerability; they're both on even ground.

Peter would like to say he's got all his weaknesses covered but he'll always have a gaping weak spot when it comes to those he cares about. Maybe that's why most people think he has none: because his weakness is too obvious.

"You got guts, Spidey-kid, even if you're still a little too sentimental for my tastes. There's hope for you yet," Tony ends on that truce and changes the subject. "So, just so we're clear on this whole fostering deal, you can't come crawling back to me or whatever arachnids do in a panic, and bring the kid back for any amount of time. *Any* amount of time. I refuse to sacrifice my downtime to look after some snot-nosed brat no matter what Pepper says," Tony points out with absolute zero irony and *now* Peter remembers why most people don't hang around Tony Stark for longer than necessary. "Didn't do it for America's greatest and oldest, won't do it for him—even if he is a cute kid."

The door opens a few seconds later so Tony adds smugly, "*And* punched Barton so hard, I'm pretty sure he lost some feathers when we found 'em."

"Very funny, Tony! That hurt, alright, kid's got an arm on him," Hawkeye complains as he enters

the room again, rubbing the purpling bruise on his shoulder. Peter frowns when Miles ducks his head as he follows behind the hero, tiny fists clenching his Captain America backpack to his chest. They could at least be a little more sensitive. Miles has gone through a lot and every instinct in Peter is telling him to grab the kid and get out of there. He isn't comfortable, Peter has never been comfortable in the Tower after all the awe died off the first time, and it's about to be 5 in the morning so he's *really fucking tired* and he's sure the kid is, too.

"Yeah, it'll be fun," Peter smiles crookedly under his mask. "Way better than hanging out around here, anyway. JARVIS has got to run out of jokes eventually."

"I assure you, Spider-Man, I have quite an extensive repertoire."

"Stealing jokes off Google doesn't count, JARVIS," Peter quips back, hand on his hip. "It's all about improvising."

"*That* explains why you're not funny," Hawkeye smirks.

"I resent that," Peter scowls.

By the door, Miles's small shoulders relax a fraction and he cracks a smile.

Peter's own smile widens.

He'll take what he can get.

Okay, it's time to be honest.

He has no idea what he's doing.

Peter always thought that when he had kids, there would be someone by his side to tell him if he's doing something wrong; if he should let the kid lock himself up in Peter's bedroom and, like, *not* come out aside from dinners and those evenings Peter takes off to hang out with him. It's been two weeks and Peter doesn't really know what to do about this situation aside from coaxing Miles out with the promise of snacks like a small animal.

Miles refuses to touch his own Spider-Man suit, looking at it with something akin to pure terror, and Peter doesn't have the heart in him to force him into it so their training has been put on hold until further notice. He doesn't know if Tony is keeping tabs on him about that, but he hasn't gotten a complaint yet, so Peter isn't going to force the kid if he doesn't want to.

Peter doesn't think he'll train Miles any time soon, if he's being honest.

He's only nine. He still has some childhood left yet, and Peter knows that once he dons the suit and goes out into New York, he'll have no more childhood to live. Call him selfish, but Peter doesn't want to take that away from him.

Miles has been forced into things far too much for someone his age as it were. Honestly, taking out any kid under the age of sixteen out to fight crime is a bad idea. Peter doesn't always battle the big-bads, that's true. It's usually just petty crime when he patrols. But if he encountered an *actual* super powered villain and Miles was with him...

Sure, the suit could camouflage perfectly into backgrounds and Miles could activate a panic button in his suit which would immediately dispatch two of Tony's Mark X suits from the Tower to come and rescue him, but it was still *dangerous*, and Peter wouldn't be able to live with himself if something happened to the kid because of one dumb mistake.

Peter has a lot of experience in making dumb mistakes; it's basically his life up until this point.

"Hey, Miles? Wanna watch a movie with me? I've got some popcorn and chips, BBQ-flavored, your favorite," Peter wheedles, peeking into his bedroom. With the money that Tony had given him in advance, he bought Miles his own twin bed and some clothes and other basic necessities. Now, Peter watches as Miles uncurls himself from his bed right by his own, placing some of his actions figures down and looking over at him. He always has those wrenching sad-eyes...

Peter's short-term goal is to reduce the sads, and so far junk food and comedies are chipping away at it.

Long-term? Maybe have the kid actually *talk* to him about his feelings. Or what he did that day.

Baby steps. That's one thing he does know when it comes to dealing with people.

"I was wondering, if we could...watch a new movie?" Miles asks tentatively, then looks down. Peter stands up straight. A request?! Cha-ching, progress! "I mean, that new Transformer movie that came out...last week. I know it's late and movies are expensive, but—!"

"Oh, you wanna' go out for a movie? Sure! It's no sweat, we can totally go—right now, actually, it isn't too late!" Peter beams, and Miles perks up, his eyes lighting up a little. Miles was definitely more receptive to him when he didn't have his mask on. Peter knows Miles locks himself up in their room whenever he dons his Spider-Man costume. He's lucky the nice old lady next door could always watch Miles when he had to go out for patrol and didn't ask any questions.

"Alright, perfect, there's an 7:15 showing—if we leave now, we'll get there right on time," Peter says after checking the listings on his phone. "Man, I haven't gone to the movies in ages!"

"It's coz you're old," Miles blurts out, then looks horrified with himself.

Peter lets out a booming laugh. "Okay, you got me there, but I'm not *that* old! I'm still hip, I still got it!" Peter strikes a dorky pose and Miles stifles a giggle as he scrambles off the bed, his toys falling over. "Hey, pick up your toys before we go, Miles, and put on a jacket! And real shoes! I'll get the snacks to sneak in—you want jellybeans or chocolate as your contraband?" Peter calls over his shoulder as he swipes his wallet off the counter, tugging his own jacket off the back of a chair while Miles runs around his room for his things.

"JELLY BEANS!"

"You got it!"

These noises, the footsteps and shuffling and the way Miles squawks as he sticks to things again because he can't control his excitement—

Peter closes his eyes, clenches his house keys in his hand hard enough to dent the metal a little, and still doesn't look at the face-down picture sitting on his bookcase as Miles comes running out, a toy stuck to the back of his head, his jacket all ruffled and the sleeves stuck awkwardly at places on his arms.

"Excited, huh? C'mon," Peter smiles a little, grabbing the toy stuck to the back of Miles's head and

tugging. It comes off with another tug and Miles rubs down his hair with an embarrassed half-smile. “We really need to work on that before you accidentally stick on something you can’t unstick from—like my Aunt, or a cereal box.”

“Aunt? Who’s she?”

“My Aunt May. You haven’t met her yet, but she’s basically my mom since she raised me since I was about your age,” Peter tells him gently. “I’ll introduce you to her one day.”

Miles looks up, hopeful. “Really?”

“Yeah, of course. When Tony stops being a butt, that is.”

Miles smiles, then asks, “What’s so bad about sticking to cereal?”

“Cereal boxes. Dude, cardboard sucks. Trust me, you do *not* want to know,” and he ruffles Miles hair a little, ushering him out the door as Miles asks more questions about bad things to stick on.

He thinks about that face-down picture frame of he and M.J. when he’s in bed later that night, but it doesn’t hurt him as bad as it did before.

Okay.

So maybe he *does* know what he’s doing.

That doesn’t mean he has to suddenly be a super mature adult—he’ll always be a man-child at heart, and M.J. can suck it because life doesn’t have to be all taxes and morning news and their 401k.

“Remember, Miles,” Peter begins with exaggerated importance as he snaps on his own goggles, his old lab-coat from his early college intern days fluttering behind him as he jogs over to where Miles is, kneeling beside him. “The difference between science and screwing around is writing it down,” he takes out a notepad and a pen and waggles it in front of the kid, whose eyes light up.

“Did you get that from MythBusters?” Miles asks excitedly.

“Yeah! Wait, you watch them, too, where you come from?!”

“Yeah! They’re awesome! They’re super funny and they do really cool stuff! Like what’s faster? An airplane or traveling by car!”

“Uhh, airplane, right?”

“It’s almost the same,” Miles tells him gravely.

“I feel like I’m missing some information there,” Peter points out, brow arched.

“I think it’s not for looooong trips. Traveling by airplane or car for long trips makes a difference. The airplane wins!,” Miles sighs, like explaining this to Peter is a huge inconvenience. “But, like, in short trips there isn’t a lot of difference!”

“Haaaah, do tell, do tell,” Peter grins and vaults over the couch, going over to the set of batteries.

“Maybe that episode exists in this world, too, and I can see the math! We can marathon Myth Busters later! Now, c’mon! Get over here, put all this on for safety!”

“What’re we doing?” Miles asks as he snaps on goggles too, watching as Peter tinkers around on the table. The goggles fall into his eyes a lot because he’s much too small for them, but it doesn’t seem to bother him much and Peter thinks it’s adorable.

“Science!”

“What *kinda*’ science?”

“The only kind there is—the *explosive* kind,” Peter grins. Miles oo’s. “See, there’s this villain here—Electro. His superpower is electricity. It’s really cool, y’know, when he’s not shooting me in the butt with it! But my webs don’t work with him because they conduct electricity a little too well so I always get zapped when I try and use ‘em. I’m gonna’ try something and see if it works...” He flicks a switch and then backs away. “Okay, you have your googles on?”

“Check!”

“Oven mitts?”

“Check!”

“Apron?”

“Check!”

“Alright, we’re ready. Experiment number 1 is a go.” Peter squints at the thread of his webbing that’s held between two clamps on the wooden table in their living room, electricity thrumming quietly from the battery he has it hooked up to. “Let’s do this on three, ready?”

Miles nods fervently, eyes wide under the googles.

“One, two—!” Peter presses the trigger and his eyes bulge, spidey-sense tingling, and he grabs Miles out of instinct, clutching him to his chest as the battery literally explodes. But he’ll swear after they manage to put out the fire that caught on the curtains and Miles prods the limp webbing and deems the experiment a failure, that Peter *totally* screamed a manly scream.

No matter what Miles says.

“Okay. So. Uh. Fact check: this failed hardcore, and it was definitely a bad idea, and I *should* have known better but I was *really* curious about what would happen if I did it anyway,” Peter frowns at the acid that’s starting to eat away at the table. “I think I’m just going to go back to working on my suit and avoid using the webs with Electro...”

He’s still muttering to himself when Miles calls out:

“Hey, Peter, look! Look! Look what I can do!”

Peter watches as Miles grabs the webbing in one hand, concentrating really hard, and he reaches over to grab the other end of the web—

“What are you—ARGHH!” Peter screams, body convulsing, his eyes rolling to the back of his head as an intense electrical charge surges through his body and fuck, it hurts, *holy fuck that was—*

“...eter! Please, please, I’m sorry!”

Sound comes back first, then sensation, and Peter comes to Miles sobbing beside him, clutching his hands to his mouth as if to try and stifle his sobs. “How...did you do that? What *was* that?” Peter groans, sitting up slowly. His muscles twitch with every move, his fingertips feel numb and they tingle; it feels about six times worse than whenever Electro manages to hit him with his energy beams. But, then again, he did make his suit resistant to Electro’s attacks and he was plain old Peter Parker when Miles did whatever he did.

“I-I don’t know!” Miles cries, snot running down his chin. Another heart wrenching sob is torn from his mouth. “I just—I can just do it and I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I didn’t wa-wanna hurt you, I just thought, I just thought it’d be cool but I-I *didn’t think*—!”

“Hey, hey, no, it’s okay!” Peter shushes gently and reaches out for him, startled when Miles flinches away from him. That—hurt a lot more than Peter expected it to. Miles has only been with him for about two months but he’s finally smiling, he talks to him now, tells him about his day at school and Peter...he can’t stand the thought that Miles flinches away from him. “No, Miles, it’s not your fault. Okay? This wasn’t your fault, you didn’t know that would happen,” Peter forces himself on his side and reaches for Miles again, tugging him towards his chest and curling an arm around him. Miles clings to him, tight enough where if it were any other person it would bruise, but Peter just holds on to him.

“M’sorry,” Miles croaks out.

“I know, buddy, but there’s nothing to be sorry about because that... was *awesome*,” Peter grins down at Miles when he stills, snaps his head up so fast Peter’s a little worried about whiplash. “Seriously, that was probably the *coolest* thing that’s ever happened to me! You can conduct *electricity*? That is so *cool*, what the heck, Miles, you’re way cooler than I’ll ever be! No fair!”

“R...really?”

“Yeah! So you gave me a little shock, big deal! As long as you use it for good, you don’t have to be sorry for it!”

Miles nods and his eyes are grave.

“We’ll work on helping you control it—we’ll call it, uh, your Venom Strike, how’s that sound?” Peter promises, raising his fist. “Sound good?”

“It’s really not weird?” Miles asks again, bumping his fist with Peter’s.

“Really,” Peter rubs the back of Miles’s head gently when the boy nods, believing him. “And whoever tells you so is a jerk, don’t believe them. Your powers should *never* bring you shame, Miles, you should cultivate them and use them for good. But just because you’re not like the others doesn’t make you bad or weird. It makes you *interesting* and *great* because you’re still you at your core,” he tightens his arms around the small child, his smile widening a fraction. “*And you are good*,” Peter tells him, earnestly. “And you can help people with your powers. I really believe that.”

Miles bottom lip quivers and he cries harder after that. Peter doesn’t really understand why because whenever he asks, Miles just shakes his head and clutches him tighter, but he thinks it has to do with that *other world*, the world Miles originally came from, the world that died and left behind a little spider boy with too-big a heart and not enough things to fill it.

Four months finds them in a rhythm.

It's comfortable, and Peter wouldn't trade it for the world.

But, see, this *always* happens to him. This is not a new scenario although the kid-part *is* new. But same problem. The Peter Parker of this universe is always naïve enough, self-sacrificing enough, *gullible enough*, to attach himself to things he knows will blow up in his face one way or another.

Peter sometimes wonders if the other Parker's in the multiverse inherit this trait or do away with it, mitigate it, kill it in some instances, because this trait is nothing if not all-consuming—an insurance liability waiting to happen, as his Uncle Ben would always say whenever he went out skateboarding.

He's always in it for the long-run, but no one ever is in return. It's the biggest irony in his life.

He hopes that Miles will stay, will pick Peter over any other superhero and not just because they both share the mantle of Spider-Man. But Peter is Peter and, well, he's not liked very much as Spider-Man as it is but he's liked even *less* as quiet, helpless, sassy, but awkward Peter Parker.

But there's no need to make things *too* complicated yet; Peter just needs to be there for Miles while he adjusts to a new world, to new powers. He just has to give Miles this chance to grow into himself.

And maybe Peter gives people too many chances, but he's nothing if not compassionate.

You're weak, Parker. Geez, how have I even made it this far without dying at least once?

Sometimes he has to wonder if Tony's not just being an asshole and actually giving him pointers in self-improvement when he tells him to be a little selfish.

"You ever develop photographs, Miles?" Peter shouts over his shoulder when he senses him walking by, a bowl of grapes in his hands. Peter's sitting on the couch, a textbook open on his lap and a few notebooks spread around him and the coffee table.

"No," Miles snorts. "I just take pictures on my phone, why would I do that?"

"Pshhh, you kids and your phones," Peter scoffs, raising his old school Canon camera in the air. "You haven't *lived* until you've developed your own photos, okay, it's a very special experience. Very deep, I love the smell of chemical fumes in the morning!"

"Of course you would," Miles rolls his eyes, popping a grape into his mouth. "If you weren't so *old*..." Miles leaves off on purpose, laughing loudly when Peter's grin sharpens and he vaults over the couch in a flash, chasing Miles up the wall and onto the ceiling, running around wildly with Miles bright laughter filling up the apartment, grapes rolling across the carpet in a spray.

But maybe Peter *is* okay with being weak, if it brings him moments of joy like this.

Eight months finds Miles finally trusting him—with feelings, jokes, advice.

To say that Peter is pleased would be an understatement.

He hasn't thought about Gwen with that vicious and gnawing pain in weeks, hasn't thought about M.J. and loneliness in even longer. He hasn't called her up to try and reconcile again, and he didn't feel as hurt as he knew he would have pre-Miles when he spotted her acting cozy with some tall, dark, and handsome-looking guy during one of his early morning patrols. That's actual improvement compared to past attempts at getting over M.J.

Peter is just really content with how his life is going—thoughts about lousy luck and self-doubt, about multiverses, are just whispers that he can quiet now with Miles' sunny laughter early in the morning.

"PETER!" Miles screeches when he comes home from school today, dropping his backpack and jacket and cap on the floor on his way to him. Since the nice old lady from next door absolutely adores Miles to bits, she doesn't mind walking him to and from school every day. It also helps that she works at a flower shop right across from the school so it's no real inconvenience to her.

Peter looks up from where he's stitching up his suit, face lighting up when he sees Miles crowd around him, shoving an envelope in his hands with bright eyes.

"Whoa, what's up, Miles? Haven't seen you this excited since I told you pizza rolls were an actual source of nutrition."

"And you *still* say I can't have any for dinner!"

"When you're older, I'll think about it," Peter grins, flipping the envelope over in his hand. "So, what's this about? This better not be a detention letter. I mean, if it is, that's totally cool, I mean, wait, no, it's *not* cool, buuut if someone *is* bullying you and you fought back, it's fine, y'know what I mean? Wait, don't beat up your peers, Miles, just tell *me* so I can set 'em straight in a totally non-threatening manner," Peter babbles, grinning sheepishly when Miles rolls his eyes and his entire body follows.

"Noo, it's not a detention letter, Peter, trust me! Just open it! Open it! Mrs. Morgenstern gave me it to me to give to you! She said it was important!"

"I still can't believe she hasn't kicked the bucket yet, she was there when I went to that...school," Peter trails off, quietly reading the letter. Okay, this is *totally* mushy and it's a really dad-thing thing to do and Peter has been trying not to think about how much this seems like a son giving their dad their report card because it *totally* isn't even though it's been more than six months and Tony hasn't said a word to him about removing Miles from his care (not that he'd let him *unless* Miles wanted to go himself because *Miles means so much to him*) but this is a total dad-thing thing to do so Peter reaches out and crushes Miles to his chest, grinning so hard his cheeks hurt.

"You're skipping the fifth grade!? Holy *crap*—this is...this is fantastic, Miles, I can't believe it!" Peter puts him in a mock headlock, rubbing his head in that way that makes Miles squirm and giggle and whine. "I'm *so proud* of you! Oh my God, we gotta'...okay, I am making the executive decision to go *out* to eat for once, what do you say? Chinese, Indian, American—?"

"MEXICAN!"

"Mexican? I, ah," Peter stutters, a rush of something heady surging through him at the memory of *him*. He tries not to think about *him* when he can. He'd been doing so well lately—with Miles and superhero duties distracting him. He pushes it away to continue: "I know this pretty good Mexican restaurant a few blocks down we can go to. A, uh, a *friend* and I would always go there when he was around so..."

“Yes! I wanna’ burrito! And some tacos!”

“You ever had a chimichanga?” Peter asks distractedly, that heady sense of nostalgia settling in his chest. He lets it. It hurts, but in a good way. Unlike M.J., he has never actively sought to hurt him, never made him feel less than he actually was. He bolstered his self-esteem more often than naught; he had a way of being sincere enough for Peter to believe that he’s actually doing good in the world. Despite his absence, Peter has always felt like he never left, would always be there, would never *truly* leave unless told to. He was infectious like that. In fact, he always compared himself to the chronic flu—always there, comes back stronger every year—which always made Peter laugh in remembrance whenever he got sick. “Because as much as it contains enough grease to clog every single one of your arteries, they are *really good*. My friend didn’t like them all that much. He actually liked saying the word more than eating them, but I recommend them.”

“What friend?” Miles asks, curiously. “Is it Johnny? He likes spicy things, right?”

“No, not that flaming disaster,” Peter snorts. Johnny and Mexican. He’d just make fire jokes all through dinner; it would be terrible. “You haven’t met him yet. His name is Deadpool...well, actually *Wade*. Wade Wilson. He goes by Deadpool because he’s, uh, uh,” Peter fumbles. Do you tell your nine-year-old that you’re best friends with a mercenary? Probably not. “He’s got a...*special* set of skills. He’s a really good fighter, so we team-up whenever he’s in town,” he says and Miles smiles a little wider. “You’ll meet him one day. He’s on a job right now. It’s taking him a while to finish, but he always visits when he’s done. He can be a little eccentric and, uh, *loud*, but he’s a really good guy. I think you’d like him a lot. I sure do.”

“Okay,” Miles smiles, adding. “Can I have a chimichanga when we get there, just to try? I like the word, too!”

“You can have part of mine,” Peter compromises, which is enough for Miles, who gets so excited he ends up on the ceiling when he jumps high. Peter doesn’t even bat an eye; he’s long-since used to Miles clinging to any surface he can get his hands on when he gets too excited. “We are *so* celebrating the fact that you’re smarter than your entire class! Ha! Take *that*, Hawkeye! I can totally raise a kid by myself!” Peter grins and tilts his head back as Miles talks from his spot cross-legged on the ceiling for a bit, and when Miles flails his gangly limbs and runs to his room for some homework assignment he had trouble with but figured out in the end, Peter looks at the crumpled letter in his lap and feels his heart swell with pride and joy and *love*—

He tucks the letter back into the envelope, stands up and slips it into the biomechanics book he’s studying as a bookmark.

“Miles, get your jacket and put on your real—your *real shoes*, Miles, you can’t go out in your roller skates, I don’t care how much more agile you are because you’re half-spider—MILES, WATCH THE BOOKCASE!”

“Hehe! Oops,” Miles grins sheepishly, tilting the bookcase back with a single finger, and Peter’s heart swells.

Twenty minutes later finds them in *Sammy’s Tacos*, with Miles swinging his sneakered feet happily as he digs into his tacos and Peter sips his soda on the opposite side of the booth. His eyes scan the other patrons in the restaurant, but he doesn’t find a familiar bright red leather suit anywhere so he turns his attention back to the little boy talking a mile a minute. Speaking of bright

red suits, Peter glances out the window and wonders if he should take the night off to hang out with Miles. Their neighbor already said she'd babysit Miles at nine but it's already eight. And, although he really wants to take a night off to spend time with him, Peter also knows that crime doesn't stop just because he's having a good day. His Spider-Man suit itches under his jacket and he's very aware of the mask he has hidden in his pocket, but he tries to ignore it as Miles tells him about what he and his friend at school were going to be up to tomorrow.

Crime doesn't stop, that's something Peter really has to drill into his thick skull as he goes to toss away their trash. It's just a moment—a moment where he leaves Miles in the booth, sipping happily at his horchata—it's just a *second*—and then his spider-sense goes off with an almost painful screech in his head and Peter snaps his head over to— “MILES, GET DOWN!” and then there's just smoke and dust and debris and Peter doesn't *care* who the hell is looking, he's grabbing whole chunks of wall and plaster and tossing it out of his way like they weigh less than paper, shouting, “MILES? MILES! ANSWER ME, ARE YOU OKAY—?”

“Well, that's an expression I haven't seen on your face in a long time, *Spider-Man*!” comes a sneering voice from above.

“Goblin!” Peter growls, grabbing his mask from his pocket and pulling it on, tearing off his jacket and shirt and jeans by the *seam* and shooting a vicious barrage of webs at Goblin's gliders, distracting him enough to go back to searching for Miles, who hasn't responded yet, oh *godohgodohgod*—

“P-Peter!” Miles coughs, his voice muffled under a slab of wall.

“Miles!” Peter shouts, relief and terror all in one, and he pushes off the wall to find him curled up under the table, not a scratch on him, but rattled and frightened. “Oh, thank God, you're okay! Come on, we need to leave now! We have to—!” Peter grabs him in a flash and dodges a barrage of chemical bombs as the Goblin laughs an ugly, shrieking laugh and circles around them from above. *Goddamnit*, he put that fucker in prison a long time ago, to think that he escaped. Peter knows he's screwed because Harry knows who Peter is a little too well. He can't go easy on him like the other times, he needs to be put back in prison but, even more than that, if he ever finds out who Miles is, what he *means* to Peter—

“Thought you were rotting away in prison, Harry!” Peter taunts, swinging up to a building, clinging onto the wall with Miles securely wrapped in his arms. He scans the restaurant for any civilians but there is none. Aside from the staff, the restaurant had been pretty much dead, and Peter knows the impact hadn't reached the counter or kitchens so he hopes everyone got out safe. “I gotta' say, I *still* think your welcoming parties are the worst! They're so unoriginal...and always cost way too much money!” He jumps to another building, avoiding more green fire, running across the ledge and hiding behind a brick wall. Peeking over the top, Peter turns back to the little boy: “Miles, listen to me, you need to run back to the apartment, okay? You have to—*shit*—!” Peter dodges and grips the boy tight to his chest, ignoring the Goblin's taunting as Peter searches for an opening, something, *anything*. If he can just find a place where Miles has enough time to run, then he can kick that green bastard's ass back to prison.

“Peter, down there!” Miles shouts.

Peter nods, dodging another volley of bombs.

“Whoa—geez, you sure are angry for someone who's *literally* been in solitary for four years—wait a sec—ah, crap!” Peter grips the wall, vaults over to another building, shoots a web and flips in the sky as the Goblin goes into an angry rant about his problems, about how much of a *hard time* he had in prison, about how much time he had to think about Peter and Spider-Man and also about

how much he hates Peter and Spider-Man and how he'd put Gwen into the ground again if he could—

“YOU DON'T GET TO SAY HER NAME!” Peter roars suddenly, turning in the air sharply and shooting a risky web to Goblin's glider. It catches. He shoots another web to his right, tosses Miles onto it, senses the way that Miles grabs onto the web like its second-nature and zip-lines down to safety as Peter pulls on his first web, propels himself closer to the Goblin, pulls his fist back and *punches him so hard in the throat—*

Peter isn't usually a violent guy. He does what needs to be done, he doesn't believe in inflicting more damage than necessary, and he most definitely doesn't believe in killing for no good reason, but something about Goblin—*Harry, he was my best friend, I trusted him—*sets him off, ignites a rabid flame in his heart that crawls up his throat, makes his sight blur red for a split second longer than Peter will ever admit to.

“You sonofa—!”

“You *ruined* my life!”

“You killed the woman I loved!”

“Fuck you, Parker! It's always been about you, hasn't it? You're always the victim—Puny, *puny* Peter Parker! Well, what about *me*? *HUH?*”

“My blood wouldn't have saved you and you know it— what you became is *your own fault!*”

Harry's face twists as the glider spins out of control in the sky and they exchange heavy blows.

“It wouldn't have worked, Harry, all you gotta' do is look in the mirror to know—!” Peter grits his teeth when he feels something sharp and hot slide into his side. He chokes back a shout, grabs Goblin's helmet, and aims another punch at his face as the glider begins to destabilize, drops from the air, and he can hear Miles shout out his name in that awful, wheezy way he does whenever he's terrified. Peter jump-kicks Goblin and flips backwards away from him, that hot, sharp knife that Harry had stabbed into his side *really* making itself known as he drops down the rest of the way and crashes into the ground, rolling to a stop.

“Peter! PETER! NO!” Miles shrieks and breaks into a run after him.

“Miles, stay away—!”

“I'mmmm gonna swiiing from a chandeliierrrrr!” A red and black figure snatches Miles right from under the flash grenade that the Goblin threw last minute.

Peter shields his eyes from the blast and crawls onto his knees as the Goblin snarls out:

“COME *OUT*, PETER!”

“Deadpool,” Peter gasps as he attempts to stand, weak from the fall.

“No need to worry, Spidey-babe! I got 'em! We'll just sit up here and play some cards—*OH! LET'S PLAY THE YELLOW CAB GAME! I'LL START!*” Deadpool shouts cheerfully from his perch on a rooftop, holding Miles under his arm securely. Peter never thought he'd *actually* be happy for the day that Deadpool intervened in one of his fights, but he sure as hell is happy Deadpool never listens to him.

“Right,” Peter breathes out shakily. He’s Spider-Man and Miles is safe. He can do this. “HARRY!”

“PARKER!”

“CHICKEN WINGS!” Deadpool cheers and Peter catches the glint of metal before three knives come straight for Goblin—he dodges two, but doesn’t expect the third, which embeds itself into a weak spot in his armor.

Peter bursts into a sprint when he catches sight of Harry desperately clutching at a wound on his green suit, recognizing his panic—and *he hates how he can still read Harry’s face, like how it was before shit hit the fan and he gained his powers and Harry got sick*—and webs his arms to his sides, webs his body stiff, his face, his legs, grabs him by the shoulder, knees his chest with just enough strength to immobilize, breaks his nose against his knee, breaks his dominant arm clean in two for good measure, and throws him against a wall until he’s unmoving but alive.

More damage than usual—he *never* inflicts this much damage, it’s a break in his usual M.O., but Peter can’t help it: he’s had too many people die because of what he does and Gwen will always, *always* be a hurt, tender spot in his heart.

Breathing in harsh breaths and storing today’s violent outburst for later analysis, Peter immediately swings up to the building where Deadpool is chattering animatedly to Miles, who looks confused and concerned but much less terrified than he did before. *Forgot Deadpool’s good with kids*, Peter thinks distractedly as he lands behind them on the rooftop, dropping to one of his knees in pain. Miles immediately detaches himself from Deadpool and runs into his chest.

“PETER!” He screeches.

“Miles,” Peter gasps. He grapples at his mask weakly—he’s having trouble breathing—but can’t get a good grip on it until Miles pulls it off his head himself, throws his arms over him, and hugs him tight. “You alright, bud? Are you hurt?”

“I’m okay! B-but you! You’re *bleeding!*”

“Ah,” Peter looks down at himself, coughs into his hand and ignores the glob of blood. Black edges his vision. “I’ve had worse.”

“He *stabbed you!*”

“Tis but a flesh wound.” Peter grins, teeth bloody. “I’m totally okay. I...yeah.”

“But you could—you can’t *go*, you can’t—you can’t leave me! No! You can’t,” Miles shakes his head fiercely, eyes watery. “You’re my *family!*”

“I’m not going anywhere, Miles,” Peter says softly, pressing a hand to the top of his head. Family, he said they were family, maybe Peter really has a shot? “Ever, okay? Except maybe to the emergency cabinet in our room this one time because, uh, I’m starting to see black,” he groans, leaning into his kid as he grips his bleeding side.

“DEADPOOL!” Miles cries, voice muffled. Peter squeezes his eyes shut. “Please, you said you liked him! Help him!”

“Why, I *do* like him, Spidey-kid, probably ‘bout as much as you do, but I doubt it! I like him *way* more than you, trust me, my stalker book says so. Also, I’ve known him longer so check and mate. But you’re gonna’ have to let go of him so I can take a look at that *frankly* sorry excuse for a stab wound in his side. Goblin has *no* finesse, he could have at least made it symmetrical, right,

Spidey-man?”

“Very funny, Deadpool,” Peter strains out, squinting an eye at the masked mercenary. He looks the same, except he’s seemingly carrying less weapons than usual. “Haven’t seen you around in a while—had a hope you’d finally seen the light and stayed there.”

“Oh, I saw a light, alright, that booty be bright enough to bring me back every single time,” Deadpool grins under his mask, but his touch is very gentle, very careful, as he picks Peter up in a bridal carry and ignores the way Peter tries to right himself. “Yo, bite-sized, you think you can climb up onto—what the *fuck*?! You can CLIMB THINGS WITH YOUR HANDS?!”

“Deadpool!” Peter growls. Miles clings onto Deadpool’s back with just the palms of his hands, blinking worriedly down at Peter while Deadpool gapes at Miles.

“Oh my god! You’re an actual spider-kid! OH MY GOD YOU’RE HIS *SON*!”

Miles tenses, going red in his cheeks.

“Deadpool, shut up and take me to my apartment! *I’m bleeding out*!”

“I cannot *believe* that I leave for a *year* and you go and have a *kid* without telling me! A miniature human! A spider baby! *MY SPAWN*! Give it to me straight, Petey, he’s mine, isn’t he? That kinky, steamy night we had in that crack-den down in Hell’s Kitchen? I never knew you could do that with your webs, honey, but lemme’ tell you, I learned something new about myself that night—!”

“Shut *up*, you moron, he’s *nine*, he couldn’t possibly be yours—!” Peter chokes on a gurgle of blood suddenly, his head tossing back limply as he tries to hold in a loud grunt for the sake of Miles, who lets out a strangled noise. Goblin did more damage than he thought or maybe it was that fall, he doesn’t know, Peter hasn’t been so unaware of his wounds since, well, since *Gwen* fell off the bridge and Peter, he—

He blacks out.

“Wakey, wakey, spider baby!”

Peter’s eyes shutter open and he finds himself staring into the familiar white holes of Deadpool’s mask, who waggles his fingers mockingly down at him before moving away from sight. He immediately realizes that he’s home, on his bed, and there’s sunlight streaming in from the curtained window to his right. When Peter tries to sit up, Deadpool gently nudges him back down and takes out a syringe that’s bigger than his goddamn arm.

“Wh-what is that? Wait a second—*Deadpool*!”

“Now, now, Spidey, hold still, this won’t hurt a *biit*—ow!” Deadpool whines when Miles punches the syringe out of his hands and hip-checks him out of the way, scrambling over to Peter as the mercenary clutches his hand melodramatically. “So not fair! You’re, like, five, you shouldn’t be able to hit as hard as a mangy, Canadian, cage fighter!”

“Heh,” Peter grins weakly, upright now thanks to Miles. “Would’ve liked to hear you say that to Wolverine’s face.”

Deadpool brightens. “We *can*, actually!”

“Deadpool,” Peter warns. “Don’t.”

“Aw, c’mon, I got him on speed dial and he doesn’t even know it!”

“No.”

“You’re even *less* fun than your spawn there!”

Peter sighs and when he goes to rub his face, his fingers touch skin, and he freezes. His stillness causes Deadpool to suddenly stop his chattering, his head cocked curiously while Peter stares down at his lap, wide-eyed and heart beating rapidly in his chest as he brings his hand back down from his bare face. Eight years and not a single superhero or villain had been able to see him without his mask and *one little run-in* with an old enemy has him unmasked to a person he hasn’t seen or heard about in over a year, a *gun-for-hire*.

There it was, the good old Parker luck kicking in.

He *almost* missed it.

“My mask...”

“Oh. Yeah. About that. Uh. So when we were up on the rooftop and you did that *awesome* superhero landing, which *really* does wonders for your ass, okay, Spidey, it’s just so *firm and unf*—!”

“Wade,” Peter growls.

“Right. Where was I? Oh, yeah, superhero landing! You were having trouble breathing and this little mess of daddy issues and repressed memories ran right up to you and unmasked you for all to see! Okay, for *me* to see! And lemme’ tell you, Spidey, you are *way* younger than I thought you were which makes me feel some type of way—not a good way, mind you, how old are you? I mean like a weird way, like I haven’t gotten a boner *that* fast since my pre-Weapon X days, but you understand, right, twenty-four-hour torture does that to a man—but seriously, *how* old are you, please tell me you’re not auditioning for Sixteen and Pregnant—so then you blacked out and I figured it was in my civic duty to help out a fellow super-bro and carry you back to your apartment like the pretty damsel you are—!”

“I’m twenty-four, and I’m *not* a damsel,” Peter grumps out, because *ouch* he thought he outgrew his baby face when he was like twenty, okay, “and, dang it, Wade, there are *children here!*”

“He’s like, twelve, he can totally handle it!”

“Nine!”

“Sixty!” Deadpool shouts. Peter slits his eyes. “Oh. Y’mean we *weren’t* picking out a position to spice up our dead marriage?”

“Deadpool, get out! I’m way too injured to be dealing with you right now!” Peter snaps while Wade giggles from his perch on his bedroom desk but doesn’t leave. Peter goes to sit up straighter but flinches, grabbing his side, gritting his teeth against the rush of dizziness. He sucks in a sharp breath when he feels gloved hands gently but firmly sit him back against the headboard. Peter looks up and finds Wade chiding him for moving so fast, it doesn’t matter how much of a spider he is, he can’t bend that way, but his touch is so soft. It’s always been soft, Peter thinks. Wade has

always handled him gently since the first day they met when he was nineteen. He handled him the same way that time in the warehouse, Peter remembers, when they both teamed-up with Daredevil and they infiltrated some criminal bed in the edge of Hell's Kitchen three years ago.

That secure grip on his wrist as he pulled him out of the line of fire, laughing wildly and telling him to stop being such a hero, he'll be fine, he'll heal right up but Peter won't so it's his duty to protect him at all costs because *he can't die no matter how much he wants to sometimes*.

Right, *Wade*, Peter remembers with a slow exhale. He's also the guy Peter had a total *moment* with in that very same warehouse that night. He isn't even going to *deny it*—it was undeniably a moment, their lips had *totally* touched for, like, *four seconds*, and Peter isn't under *any* illusion that they wouldn't have ended up making-out like a couple of teenagers if Peter's spidey-sense hadn't gone off and alerted him that Daredevil was near.

Those same hands that once held his jaw so reverently now prod around his injuries with a clinical sort of detachment. In fact, his usual flirty banter aside, Wade hasn't touched him anymore than necessary which is *unusual* because Wade *always* touched him—small body brushes, hovering, playful taps, whatever—but he always did it.

Peter tries not to let it get to him.

Maybe Wade found himself a partner, who knows, he's been away for so long...it wouldn't be unreasonable to think so.

Maybe Cable came back into the picture—and Peter mentally smacks himself back into gear, tells himself to *stop acting like a fucking teenager, it's none of his business if Wade's back to pining after that self-righteous, time-travelling, insensitive Barney Ross-looking motherhugger*.

No. He's cool, he's fine.

He's got no right to feel jealous.

He never gave Wade a chance to think they *had* a chance to begin with. It's no one's fault but his own and—*god*, does he miss regret. He'd almost forgotten what it tastes like, bitter and heavy in his throat as he lets go of the sheets he's already ripped a little.

“...wondered if your suit had padded butt cheeks but, *man*, the fact that it doesn't really puts things into perspective for me...”

“Wade,” Peter sighs. *Not today, Red Satan*, Peter thinks to himself and turns to find Miles standing by his bedside, quiet and downcast. “Hey, whoa there, no tears,” Peter softly coos, reaching out for Miles and wiping away the tear streaks with his palm. His heart weighs for a different reason now. “C'mon, buddy, I'm fine. I'm a hero, remember? I get a little beat up sometimes, but I always come back. C'mere.”

The boy crawls up and onto the bed with an agility borne from the radioactive spider that bit him, and he sticks himself to Peter's side despite Deadpool's whine that it was his turn to cuddle Peter. Miles just hides his face in Peter's shoulder and snuffles.

Muffled in his shoulder, Miles asks, “You're really better? You're going to be okay?”

“Yeah. My healing factor might not work as well as other superheroes'...”

“RE: works about as great as slapping a band-aid over a gash on your stomach,” Deadpool interjects. “Meaning: your guts are still gonna' spill out but, hey, at least you have a cool Hello

Kitty sticker to go along with it!"

"*But* I bounce back pretty quickly after a good night's rest. These wounds will be gone in three days, max six. I haven't even blacked out again, I'm doing great! This is way better than that time the Rhino rammed me into a building a dozen times, I couldn't even form words for a whole six hours then," Peter laughs. Miles furrows his brows, concerned. Deadpool makes incredulous 'wtf' hand gestures at Peter in the background. "Right now, I just feel like I spent a whole forty-eight hours awake, drinking energy drinks and eating chips. So like usual."

Miles offers him a sleepy smile. "You look better but...s'till not fair you can stay up but I can't. We both go to school!"

"Elementary school and grad school are two *very different* animals, Miles. You'll see when you get older," Peter rubs his afro good-naturedly but Miles is already halfway asleep, given how he mumbles but doesn't open his eyes.

It's quiet for a moment, then:

"So,"

Peter looks at Deadpool, who's standing now, arms crossed over his chest almost defensively.

"Who's the lucky broad? Is it that red head of yours? I didn't think you'd settle down so early into the game, Pete's. But, then again, I can't exactly judge. I would have *totally* locked you down if I had the chance," and Peter doesn't let himself read into the underlying bitterness in his voice when he said that. (RE: he does). "Speaking of, where is petite, white, and generic? Shouldn't she be here to, y'know, make sure all your important bits survived?"

Peter chuckles. "There's no one, Deadpool. M.J. and I, uh, we broke up less than a year ago and I haven't—I mean, there hasn't been any time for me to date and with the whole superhero gig, well, I don't want to involve a civilian again so I just haven't tried," Peter clears his throat, cheeks pinkening a little under Deadpool's sudden scrutiny. The mask has always thrown Peter off; he can't read Deadpool like he can other people because he's never seen Deadpool without his mask. Peter wonders if it had been the same for him. "With Miles, he...it's complicated, okay? Like really complicated and really messed up." And he knows Tony told him not to tell anyone but Deadpool already knows his identity and, thing is, *Peter knows Deadpool*. If he didn't tell him he'd go investigate himself and probably find out more than Peter is comfortable with; better to just rip the band-aid off all at once. "Long story short, Miles is from another universe that collapsed in on itself because of some huge super-hero showdown. He's basically the Spider-Man from Earth-1610 since the Peter Parker—the *other me*—that existed there...uh, died before he could take him under his wing. Anyway, I'm basically fostering Miles for an indefinite amount of time in *this* universe. Probably a long time, if I'm being honest."

In his arm, Miles stiffens and curls up tighter against him.

Peter's lip twitches into a smile despite himself.

"Ooh! DILF? Sign me *up*, baby!" Deadpool squeals, seemingly ignoring everything. Peter's not fooled; Deadpool is processing, making connections, *actually thinking* because for all his crazy and homicidal tendencies, one doesn't become an internationally renowned mercenary by lacking critical thinking skills. He's reckless, yes; a menace, yeah; an adrenaline junkie, definitely, but danger is *different* for a man who can't *die and can regrow limbs*.

"Seriously? That's what you take away from all that?" Peter plays along anyway.

“I’m *just* saying, you rock it, okay, you going all papa bear on Goblin for hurting your little spider spawn really got me going,” Deadpool muses, crossing his arms and looking down at Peter with that same critical look he always has around him. Peter steadfastly keeps his eyes on Wade’s mask and *not* his bulging biceps or broad shoulders, which beat out Daredevil’s *any* day, and definitely not his washboard abs, no, that way also lies hell and Peter wasn’t going to go down that way again.

Peter ignores the tiny voice in the back of his head that tells him that he *always* goes down that way whenever Wade is involved—ever since that *stupid* day in the warehouse, there’s all this tension, this *want* and *curiosity* on behalf of Peter. He’s somewhat relieved that Wade is as perceptive as he is and that Peter has enough guilt already so he never acted on the tension. Although, sometimes, when he’s had a bad day and he’s really fucking tired, he thinks about what would have happened if he’d acted on his desires while he had been with M.J.

Peter had reconciled with M.J. some weeks after the warehouse incident, and then spent the following months glaring down stiffies every time Deadpool found him around the city. Especially when M.J. and he took ‘breaks’ during that time. Really, that should have been a sign that things weren’t ever going to go right with M.J.—no decent boyfriend sprang a boner for motor-mouthed mercenaries every time they fought side-by-side or had dinner in ratty taco places. Then again, no decent girlfriend would force their boyfriend to choose between the safety of New York City *and* his Ph.D. aspirations or their relationship *so...*

Peter notices that Miles is breathing evenly, asleep. He must not have gotten sleep last night while Peter was out cold, he thinks, and tries to push down the guilt at worrying a loved one again. It’s bad enough he can’t tell his Aunt May about Miles until Tony gives him the okay, he doesn’t need to be worrying Miles, too.

“Thank you, for protecting Miles,” Peter tells Deadpool sincerely, dropping his eyes to Miles’s short afro. “I really don’t need my villain origin story to start with the death of a loved one. That’s so cliché and overdone,” Peter jokes, but the darkness in his tone isn’t overlooked by the mercenary.

Deadpool cocks his head. “I always thought you’d go dark when that pretty red-haired ex of yours got herself kidnapped for doing something exaggeratedly average, like taking a shit.”

Peter barks a harsh laugh. “You can say she left me because she *didn’t* want to get kidnapped. Again. And because maybe she wanted me to stop being a hero in my spare time...and drop my MA in bioengineering because it was ‘unhealthy’ and ‘abetting my heroism’.”

“Dude.”

“I know. But that’s over and done with. She’s happy with some CEO-type now. It’s for the best,” Peter says, without any hard feelings. He really is glad that M.J. is happy now even if it took him some time to come to terms with their fractured relationship. She should at least have what he can’t because of his powers, because of the responsibility he feels towards NYC and the world.

Peter shifts and Miles grumbles, slapping a hand over Peter’s bare chest to keep him still. When Peter tugs it, he finds it’s stuck to his skin. “Well, I’m not going anywhere soon. He loses control of his abilities when he’s stressed,” Peter smiles. “Hey, do you think you can find the bag of jellybeans I have in the pantry and bring it over? I’m starving.”

“Dessert for breakfast, huh? Hardcore, but I’ll do you one better!” Deadpool grins, but does as he’s told for once.

Peter has a moment to take a breath and coach himself into not making this weird. He hasn't seen Deadpool in over a year, that's true: Wade always told him when he took a job (which always ended with them arguing about morality before he left) but that evening Wade said *SHIELD* had contacted him for a job. Something about it being a test? An extensive interview of some sort? He didn't go into detail. Wade is good at deflecting attention from things that actually matter and Peter is still trying to find a foolproof way to uncover what Wade is really hiding behind his chatter.

He did know, however, that *SHIELD* jobs were *long jobs*. But Deadpool had said that he'd probably be back the next day. When Peter had said that wasn't any time at all, Wade had said that *any* time away from him was too much time. Another reminder to Peter that Wade probably had *way* more game than him because that got his heart kicking up ugly butterflies and a *helluva* lot of guilt for said butterflies considering he was in a relationship with M.J. at the time.

Until he chose the world and she dumped him, that is. But by then, Wade had been long gone.

And Peter had been alone again.

"PANCAKES! The wounded can eat pancakes, right? Who am I kiddin'—hell yeah they can eat pancakes, pancakes are for *everyone*!"

Peter startles when he finds Deadpool standing at the threshold of his bedroom door, holding up a plate stacked with pancakes. He's got one of Miles's aprons on, so it's hysterically tiny on someone as huge as Deadpool, and Peter can't help the snort of laughter at the sight, ducking his head and rubbing a hand over his face to hide his fond smile.

"You're such a moron," Peter chuckles. "Did you really make me breakfast?"

"I sure did, lovebug!" Wade cheerfully says, skipping over and placing the plate of pancakes on his lap. Peter notices they're strawberry chocolate chip pancakes and has to bite back a grin. Huh, Wade remembered his favorite type of pancake. That was...unbearably sweet and Peter shuts that down before he makes things weird.

"Strawberry chocolate—wait, did Miles eat? Deadpool, did he have breakfast? How long was he awake?" Peter suddenly stops, looking up at Deadpool. "And did he brush his teeth? He hates that, but he has to or else it'll become a habit—!"

"Relaaaax, Spider-mom!" Deadpool snorts. "Your tiny offspring had some of my fabulous pancakes when he woke up from his nap!"

"Nap?" Peter slits his eyes.

"Uhhh..."

"*Nap*?" Peter repeats, barring some teeth.

"Whoa, bad Deadpool! Down boy!" He suddenly chides, twisting his legs in and covering his crotch with a scandalized look. "But you! Bad Spidey! You can't just look at me like that and not expect me to react, Peter, *GOSH! You're tearing this family apart with your sexy looks of fury!*"

Peter rolls his eyes. "Nap, Wade?"

"Are we on first-name basis now?" He asks, hopefully.

Peter just stares at him, waiting.

Deadpool deflates. “Fine. So, I tried to get the kid to go to bed but he was...he was really worried about you, Spidey,” he slows, going quiet. “So I felt like it would be better to have him awake and watching over you than awake and stressing out about *not* watching over you,” Deadpool shrugs, plucking at the apron straining around his abs. “He eventually fell asleep for a few hours, had some pancakes when he woke up, watched some toons, beat me up, ate some more pancakes, played some games, punched me in the dick for funsies, y’know, the usual.”

“I have trouble believing a nine-year-old could beat you up, Deadpool.”

“Heeey! I’ll have you know, I have very delicate sensibilities and that kid could sniff out all my insecurities like a goddamn bloodhound! He’s a menace, I tell ya’, A MENACE!”

“Keep it down, he’s sleeping!”

“*Menace*,” Deadpool hisses. “I’m watching you,” he tells the back of Miles’ head.

“Alright, I believe you,” Peter sighs just as Deadpool starts muttering about emotional compensation and lawsuits. “What time is it?”

“Six fifty. Why, you need to go do some spider things? Things that spiders do? Arachnid things? *Peter Parker things*?”

“Something like that,” Peter grins and glances down at Miles’ suddenly too-still body. Kid couldn’t feign sleep even if he tried; they had to fix that, too, just in case. “I know you’re awake. You’re still going to school, Miles.”

“Nnnngggghh.”

“You’re *going*.”

“Nggg....*but Peter!*”

“I don’t care—you’re part spider, you don’t even need that much sleep and you know it. You stayed up until four once playing *Dragon Age: Inquisition* while I was literally knocked out in bed and you were fine all day, c’mon, up! Up!” Peter ignores his kid’s groaning and whining, cracking his back and swinging his legs over the mattress while Miles crawled on his knees and rubbed his eyes. His injuries didn’t feel so bad now that he’s been awake for a while. Peter takes a slow breath, cracks his neck, arches to crack his spine, realizes Wade hasn’t said a word for a while now, and looks up to find him blatantly staring at him.

“Wade?” Peter asks, worriedly. “You okay?”

“Wha—yes! More than okay, actually! Yes sir, there’s nothing wrong with me. I was *definitely* not thinking about smashing that plate of pancakes on your chest and licking it off you. Nope. That would be irrational. But *I’m* irrational. Wait a sec, you’re *right*, what *is* stopping me from abusing my title as mentally unstable and doing it?! Peter, prepare your anus!”

“CHILDREN!”

“He’s like, *eight!* He doesn’t know anatomy yet!”

“Do too!” Miles argues. “Anus means butt!”

“Miles, oh my god,” Peter whispers in horror. “Deadpool, shut up, I swear if you say anymore on this I’ll make you see the light myself!”

“Promise?” Deadpool bats his eyes.

Peter can't help it: he barks out a loud laugh, gripping his side when pain flares up. “Oh, jeez... welcome back, Deadpool. I almost missed your stupidity in my life,” he teases, overlooking the way Deadpool stills at that, ducks his head a little.

“Yeah,” Deadpool says distractedly while Peter gets on his feet and prods Miles to his, too, grumbling about getting him dressed and did he even do his homework? He was *going* to skip another grade if he could help it! Maybe even two!

“Good to be back, Webs.”

How it Develops

Chapter Notes

I totally used part of Andrew Garfield's interview answer in this fic. Now you guys know which Spidey I'm envisioning lmao

Continue reading for squishy domestic goodness.

ii.

Deadpool is stalking him.

Okay, correction: Deadpool is *always* stalking him—at least, when he's in New York, but never quite like *this*.

It's always been a more playful type of stalking and, yes, Peter *knows* how that sounds but bear with him for a second. By 'stalking,' Peter means 'coincidentally' running into each other whenever Deadpool was bored and Peter was on patrol. Or Deadpool knowing whenever Peter met up with the Fantastic Four for something or the other, or even whenever Peter hung out with some of his other superhero friends when they all simultaneously had down-time. It wasn't anything really creepy all things considered, since Peter didn't particularly care if Deadpool knew or not. It was public knowledge that he hung out with other heroes on a semi-regular basis.

Peter also genuinely enjoyed hanging out with Deadpool so, more often than not, he would anticipate the merc ambushing him in more and more creative ways—always failing, because *spidey-sense*, but still, it was fun.

And Deadpool wasn't *always* around so Peter got his fill of the merc when he could. Deadpool was generally only in New York for very specific things and for short periods of time. Either he was waiting for a contract from an employer or he already *had* a contract and he was just preparing for it.

For the latter, Peter always made sure to warn him that if he caught him killing people in his city then he'd have to answer to him.

But now, well...

There wasn't any job waiting for him.

Deadpool wasn't *looking for jobs*, for some reason that still eluded Peter. He'd told him so, *whined really*, and went around the real reason he wasn't taking contracts anymore by telling him dumb jokes until Peter threatened to web him to the ceiling like last time if he didn't just shut up.

Deadpool wasn't even being *subtle* in his stalking this time around, either.

This was the fifth time *today* Peter had caught Deadpool hovering near him—never reaching out, not even for a joke. At first Peter thought it was some elaborate prank, but Deadpool wouldn't be so out in the open like that if he was planning something big. He was better at hiding than this, being a mercenary and all.

But today it felt almost as if Deadpool was *scared* to reach out to him which was ridiculous because they'd been friends for years—okay, acquaintances for the most part, but once Peter stopped hanging onto the Avengers' every word, he and the merc really hit it off.

Then Peter went and developed a dumb crush on him because he's an *idiot* and, well, that was probably why he couldn't stand all the hovering.

Peter admits he can be a *little* needy.

"Deadpool, I know you're there."

Silence, followed by leather shifting.

"Deadpool, I'm not a T-Rex, I can still see you even if you don't move."

"*That sounds like something a T-Rex would say!*" Deadpool accuses. Peter snorts and turns, crossing his arms when Deadpool jumps behind a stack of paper towels a second later. Peter raises a brow and walks over to peek around the corner, his other brow raising incredulously when he finds Deadpool on the floor, hand holding his head up, his other hand tossing a roll of paper towels up and down casually.

"Soo, you like *Brawny*? Because I've got enough *brawn* for both of us, baby," he winks, flexing a muscled arm.

"I'm busy, maybe some other day," Peter dismisses and walks past him. Instantly, Deadpool is by his side.

"So, by that you mean, like, *now*, right? Because it's gotta' be some other day *somewhere*, hot stuff," Deadpool chatters as Peter grabs some spaghetti sauce, looks at the price, and sticks it in his cart. Deadpool bumps into his back, staggers back, shouts, "OH MY GOD!"

"What?! What is it?!" Peter jumps, fists tense in preparation for a fight.

"You are *not* gonna' make what I think you are with that, are you?" Deadpool tsks, shaking his head. "Nuh-uh, Peter, my boy, you can't feed your kid this *garbage*." He grabs the sauce and goes to throw it on the floor. Peter grabs it before he can and sticks it back in his grocery cart.

"...Just for that, you're paying for it," Peter flatly states. Wade gasps. "And, also, why the heck not? It's just pasta sauce. Miles likes spaghetti, and he's getting home late today because he's got sports after school. He joined the—!"

"Junior softball club, yeah, I know. To be honest, I think he'd do better in football, it's a contact sport, he'd be able to exercise his super abilities more liberally and tone those chicken legs of his, but whatever, there's time for him to realize his true destiny as an NFL Quarterback star," Deadpool waves off and Peter blinks. How did he know—? "But that's a plot point for another time. What I *mean* is feeding him this processed garbage is bad for him in the long-run, okay? He's a growing kid with super-duper cutesy spider abilities. He needs *real food*."

"This *is* real food!"

"Peter Benjamin Parker! Don't you take that tone with me, young man! Now, listen to mama Deadpool when he tells you that you *cannot* feed your little spidey son this artificial trash for fear of his tiny spidey tummy getting all wrecked by the tragedy that is American nutrition!"

"Don't use my middle name, I get it!"

“Come with me! To the vegetable aisle! That’s *where the green stuff is*, in case you didn’t know! Savage!”

“I know what vegetables are! I eat them, too, y’know!” Peter shouts, defensively. “I like carrots!”

“Uh huh, and I know how to create my own little ecosystem out of the leftover pizza and stress-cooked pancakes I made over the years—waaaaaait a second...” Deadpool squints an eye and looks off to the side, listening to one of the boxes. “You’re right. Our pizza-ecosystem is nearly complete! Yay, science! In a few more years, they’ll be evolved enough to create tiny hover boards—what, no, White, stop this—*that’s tyranny!!*”

“Listen, I once lived off frozen dinners for a whole month and I turned out just fine!” Peter argues as Deadpool drags him away by the wrist, seemingly ignoring whatever one of the boxes had been rattling off about.

“Oh, Peter,” Deadpool sighs in dismay, gazing at his stomach. “I can tell.”

“What? No way! I don’t—I mean—I have abs!” Peter protests, clutching his gut self-consciously.

“Mhm.”

“I do!”

“Of course, honey.”

“I *do*! Look!” Peter shouts, pulling his shirt up. Deadpool freezes mid-step, grins that shit-eating grin of his, and only then does Peter know he’s been duped. “Gosh darn it, Wade, not again!” Peter groans, shaking his wrist from Deadpool’s hold. “What’d I tell you about doing that?! *Not* cool, dude!”

“*Not* to do it? But it’s so funny, you’re *so* funny! You actually think you’re *not* attractive, it’s hysterical. You’re so *blind* to your own attractiveness—you’re like an even 20 and you still think you’re a 2,” Deadpool sniggers. “Oh, heroes. So humble.”

“Shut up and go away,” Peter says, stomping to the vegetable aisle.

“Oh, baby! Hate to see you go, love to watch you walk awaaaay!” Wade sings from behind him, and Peter has to concentrate on not blushing too hard when he feels Wade’s gaze on his ass. “But seriously, did you subsist on frozen dinners for a whole month? Because, honest to god, baby, when I say you can call me whenever you need some help, *I mean it!* I’m immortal,” Wade tells him placidly, pointing to himself. Peter pauses, something worrying and awful churning in his gut all of a sudden, “and you are *not* so while I can eat all the tacos I want because I am the filthy fucking rich sugar daddy merc you always dreamed of but would never admit—”

“You’re immortal?”

“Yes, Peter, we went over this just now. Keep up, sweetheart,” Deadpool shakes his head, talking to one of the boxes, “and they say *I’m* distracte—Ooh, look, there’s a buy one get two free sale on *tooth picks*! What a steal! I want sixty.”

“No, no, wait, focus, Wade! If you’re immortal...” Peter doesn’t know it, but he’s looking at Deadpool with the *saddest* puppy-dog eyes he has ever seen directed at him and he’s killed a lot of people, okay. “Then...does that mean you’ll outlive me and have to watch me die one day?”

“Uhhh...whoa,” Deadpool stares, mouth opening and closing before he settles on what he’s going

to say. “This went from zero to a hundred real fast. Rewind. Actually, *pause*.”

“Deadpool, does it?”

“I thought we were *paused*, why are you still talking? Can you transcend time, too?! Aaaarrghhh, not again! Why must I fall for *all* time manipulators?!” He wails, shaking a fist at the ceiling. “It’s almost as if the writers of my comic *don’t ever want me to be happy*.”

“WADE!”

“Don’t yell at me, all I’ve ever done was love you!” Deadpool sobs, turning to a wide-eyed passerby. “He hurts me but it feels like true love! Our first kiss was a punch to my *face*!”

“Wade, quit *distracting me and answer my damn question*!” Peter hisses, pulling him down by one of the many leather straps on his suit so they’re eye-to-eye. “And quit terrorizing civilians with bad renditions of indie pop songs! So?”

“Soo...you come here often? Ouch, ow, okay! Okay! Umm...maybe? I mean, I do age!” Deadpool says quickly when Peter narrows his eyes. “Just...slowly, suuuper slowly. Imagine paint drying, but even *slower* than that. I think. Time travelling is really confusing...”

“How old are you?” Peter asks suddenly. “No, wait, how old are you *really*?”

“This feels a little too *Twilight* for my tastes. I’m even stalking you, but a little light stalking never hurt anyone except Bella,” Deadpool giggles. At Peter’s disapproving look, Deadpool sighs loudly. “Okay, uh, thirty-four? Last time I checked? I don’t know. Time passes weirdly for me. And also, time traveling is fucked up, and Cable *said* I could age up or I could not so it’s always a toss-up for how old I come back as, but I feel like he was fucking with me when he told me that. I can’t tell sometimes. He’s always such a self-righteous, douchebaggy, grumpy cat.”

“If you took off your mask, I could check,” Peter suggests, innocently. “I’m pretty good at telling ages.”

“Hey, that’s a good—ah, ah, ah! Nice try, Spidey-cat, but there is *no way* you’re getting a gander at *this* spectacle under here,” Wade chuckles self-deprecatingly, pointing at his masked face. “Not while I’m alive, at least! I *just* got you okay with the fact that I know every single uncomfortable detail of your life, I don’t need you running away the instant you get a glance at my ugly mug!”

“Why not? You’ve seen my face! You even know my full name! *And* my favorite vegetable. Not many people know my favorite vegetable, it’s sacred.”

“Haha,” Deadpool chortles, wiping away a fake tear. “Ohh, heroes! They’re so naïve! It’s *adorable*! This is why I keep you around.”

“You *do not* know every uncomfortable aspect of my life, Deadpool, please.”

Deadpool gasps. “How *dare* you accuse me of not knowing every single thing there is about you?! I’ll have you know that in some parts of the world, my name is interchangeable with the NSA!”

Peter snorts. “Yeah, right.” He walks over to some grapes, picks up a bag that doesn’t look too beat up, and drops it into his cart. “You may be an internationally renowned mercenary who can find any person with just their hair color but...wait,” Peter blinks, but before he can think about how much Deadpool could *really* know about him, he distracts him, grabbing him by the elbow and shoving him towards some tomatoes, yammering on about how one doesn’t *choose* a tomato but rather the tomato chooses them. Peter smiles and doesn’t feel so tired anymore, letting Wade drag

him around the grocery store for other ingredients—letting him give an exaggeratedly long description and background to each vegetable, each fruit, they pass, and once they finish gathering all the needed ingredients and Deadpool is standing beside him, preening and proud of their fully stuffed grocery cart, Peter has no idea what they’re going to do with any of the things Deadpool made him get.

“This is great and all, but, uh, I actually *can’t* cook anything that isn’t prepackaged,” Peter speaks up once they’re in line to check-out.

“Well, what a coincidence! You have every ingredient I need to make ten servings of spaghetti and meatballs with a side of freshly steamed vegetables and old dead grandma’s famous mashed potatoes!” Deadpool mock gasps, placing a hand over his masked mouth. “Made with *real cream cheese*, not that water shit listed on the box.”

“That sounds wonderful, but I...can’t eat mashed potatoes,” Peter admits, with such pain on his face that Deadpool can feel it, too.

“Wha...*excuse me?! You can’t...what is this...what...all Irish men and women are crying, practically inconsolable. How dare you.*”

“Look, I’m a sensitive guy, alright? I’ve got a sensitive stomach and I just, I can eat all *other* potatoes—like, I can eat baked potatoes, roast potatoes, French fries, I just can’t eat mashed potatoes, okay, something about it just...brings me a great measure of pain. And an hour on the toilet, so,” Peter shrugs. “No mashed potatoes.”

“That sounds made-up but *fine*. I guess I can make you a baked potato, you fucking weirdo.”

Peter doesn’t even bother hiding his bright smile this time. “So you *are* gonna’ make me dinner! Is this going to become a problem, Wade?”

“Nope, not at all! Just expect to see me in your kitchen every day unless otherwise stated from six to eight from now on!” Wade declares cheerfully, grabbing Peter’s grocery cart and dumping all the ingredients on the conveyer belt along with some other junk Peter didn’t notice Wade had snagged.

“No Oreos,” Peter says when he spots them, grabbing the package.

“*What?* Oh, don’t tell me you’re ‘allergic’ to the one good thing in my entire fucking life, too, Parker!” Wade complains, throwing his hands up. “That would be my luck! Love of my life: allergic to *happiness*. God, can’t the writers just *give me a fucking break?!’*”

“No, no, I’m not allergic to Oreos, don’t be ridiculous. I just don’t buy them anymore because Miles likes to eat the *entire package* by himself.”

“Um, like there was any *other* way to eat Oreos?”

Peter sends him a long-suffering look. “*And then* he can’t sleep because he’s too hyper so he’s tired at school the next day and it’s bad parenting, okay. Not that I’m his parent, but I mean, he *is* under my care so. Yeah. Bad parenting. Found that out the hard way.”

“Oh-*kay*. But, what if, and hear me out here...*I eat the entire package all by myself?*” Deadpool asks, holding his hands out as if they’re conducting a very serious business agreement.

“...Can you?”

“Can you, he asks,” Deadpool scoffs. “*Of course I can!* Who do you take me for?! Hawkeye?! Man, that guy sure takes bribes real easy...just toss him some bread, he’s all over it. It’s fascinating.”

“Don’t ever tell him that to his face,” Peter says before anything. Deadpool grins but doesn’t promise. “As for the cookies...eh, alright. Why not. Have at it,” Peter decides after a moment, quirking a smile when Deadpool punches the air triumphantly and tosses the package of cookies back onto the conveyor belt.

When Peter digs around his wallet for his debit card after all the items have been scanned, Deadpool grabs his shoulder and shoves him down. While Peter tries not to knock out a tooth against the edge of the counter because his spidey-sense is shit apparently, Deadpool pays in cash and has all the bags loaded up in both his hands and arms, grumbling about Peter always taking his sweet goddamn time.

“But, no, wait! I could have paid for those! I have money now!”

“Just because Iron Dick is your sugar daddy now, which *I am not* bitter about in the slightest but, I do have to say...WHY COULDN’T I BE YOUR SUGAR DADDY?!” Deadpool screeches, ignoring all the weird looks he gets and Peter’s placating hands, his wincing expression. “WHAT’S HE GOT THAT I DON’T, HUH?! Is it the goatee? Because I may or may not have a goatee under this mask. Think of it as Schrodinger’s goatee. Except less ‘potential’ and more ‘I don’t have hair anymore.’ Now *take my money, you beautiful man!*”

“No, wait, you got it all wrong! H-he’s not my sugar daddy! No one is anyone’s sugar *anything*, alright?!” Peter tries to be stern, holding his hands out. But his face is red from all the looks they’re gathering. Peter manages to push them out of the store, away from any prying eyes as he talks: “He’s just—he technically has legal custody of Miles right now. I haven’t gotten around to asking him if I could officially adopt him, okay? I’ve been really busy with my grad classes since I can only work on my thesis at night and patrolling eats up all my time, too, and I don’t really know if I *can* adopt Miles legally? I’m not even sure Tony has alerted SHIELD about his presence in this world yet. It’s just a really sensitive situation right now because he’s underage.”

“Kid fell from the sky. He’s got Spidey-powers. Who else has Spidey-powers? You do. Who should raise him? You should. Problem solved. Next question.”

Peter sighs, shaking his head. “It isn’t that easy and *you know that*, Wade.”

Deadpool shrugs, holding out his hand in a meh gesture. “I’m just saying, if you’ve got a pretty good set-up, why rock the waters? But what do I know about raisin’ kids. I don’t have kids,” he states, adding with a wary look. “In this universe. I think...nope, don’t have any kids.”

“Have you slept...actually, don’t answer that.”

“I mean, I have, but I like *taking it* more than—!” Deadpool begins with a filthy grin but Peter talks over him loudly:

“Let’s just say you don’t have kids! Because I’m pretty sure if you did, they’d have contacted you already for child-support since you’re, like, basically loaded. And infamous. And also your phone number is in the public phonebook so it wouldn’t be that hard to get ahold of you.”

“Finally. Someone who realizes how much money I have,” Deadpool smirks, tugging his leather straps out suggestively. “You know what I’d make? A great sugar daddy. You know what I *need*? A sugar baby. I’m taking applications,” he winks.

“No, no sugar *anything*’s,” Peter insists. “I refuse to take your money for any type of service,” and he ignores Deadpool’s childish groan to focus on the other problem that has been plaguing him for a while. Adoption. Did he even make enough money? Ha. No. But Tony could pull some strings here and there and give him legal guardianship of Miles, he’s sure, but is he even ready for that type of responsibility? It had been terrifying enough being in a relationship with a civilian, but now adopting a child? A *super-powered* child, but still, a child nonetheless, who Peter would be responsible for, who Peter would have to raise and love and support and—

“What if Miles doesn’t want this and I force it on him?” Peter whispers. Deadpool cuts himself off immediately, returning his full-attention to Peter, who isn’t looking at him anymore. He’s staring at the ground, anxiety making him chew his bottom lip. “I don’t wanna’ do that. Too many people have made decisions for him without his input. I-I should ask him, shouldn’t I? But what if he says no? I’m gonna’ be really hurt if he does and it’ll be awkward between us and whose gonna’ look after him if this gets weird—?”

“Peter,” Deadpool interrupts, turning sharply to face him. He grips his shoulders, the bags of groceries hanging off his forearms. “Miles *loves you*, okay? Yellow admitted defeat a long time ago and agrees that Miles may love you about as much as we love your sweet, sweet ass, baby boy, and that’s saying *a lot* because I have seen many asses in my line of work and none compare to your glorious booty,” Deadpool says, very seriously. Peter cannot believe that he’s taking the fact that Deadpool loves his ass so seriously, either. “So. Go to Tiny Starkers Tower tomorrow and file in those papers, alright, Spidey-dad? It’ll mean the world to him,” his voice suddenly goes very soft, so unlike the Deadpool Peter is used to that it startles him. Peter stares as he lowers his head a little, as if lost in thought. “It’ll—he deserves someone who loves him, is all. He’s a good kid.”

“I...thank you, Wade,” Peter says thickly, when he gets his tongue working again. He’s getting those ugly butterflies again. This is super confusing because Wade has never seriously acted on his flirting so Peter has no right to take his word, well, seriously. That kiss they shared notwithstanding, Peter is *ninety* percent certain this is just Wade’s default: he flirts around with everyone and everything he sees which *does not* turn Peter into a dumb jealous rage monster, okay, it doesn’t. He just doesn’t like *thinking* about it for fear of reflexively punching Wade in the face or something. “Really, thanks. This means so much to me! You’re a... really great friend, y’know?”

“Say what now?”

Peter furrows his brows. “Great friend?”

Deadpool jolts again and suddenly Peter understands. It makes his heart hurt a little, knowing that Deadpool has gone all this time without knowing that he was an important person in Peter’s life. “You *do* know you’re my friend, right? Why *else* would I put up with you for this long? I bought you *tacos* when we hung out after patrol!”

“*Ohmigod*,” Deadpool wheezes under his breath. “It’s happening, *it’s really happening!* Dreams *do* come true! What—shut up, White, don’t ruin this for me, you cunt!”

“Deadpool?”

“We talked about this,” Deadpool hisses to himself, looking up to the right. Where Peter guesses White...hovers? Deadpool tried to explain his boxes to him once. “You said you would behave until we *really* figured out if he wants to—don’t yell at me, you bitch! You were the one who had the *brilliant* idea to—no, I know you’re me—goddammit!”

“Wade? Hey, Wade? Oh, man...” Peter frowns when Deadpool just continues to argue himself, gesturing wildly, threatening to pull a gun if White doesn’t chill the fuck out. Peter rubs the back of

his neck. Great, his boxes were acting up again. It wasn't often they did, but once they got going, Peter knew it was difficult for Deadpool to focus again. Usually Deadpool was more discreet about his arguing but Peter guesses this...must have caught him too off-guard?

No one really gave Deadpool the time of day when it came to his mental health issues, but Peter was a decent enough person to know that condemning Wade for them was the opposite of helping. Besides, his boxes were unnaturally forced upon him; Peter had read some of the files on Deadpool when he inquired about him those many years ago and the voices seemed to be a direct manifestation of the years spent being tortured in the Weapon X program. Whether they emerged as a side-effect to the mutation or torture, it was still unknown, although Peter believed that a lesser man would not have come out coherent at all. Wade was strong, stronger than most gave him credit for. Regardless, Peter was adaptable and he knew Deadpool long enough now to know how to handle him when he got like this. Usually it was just addressing the boxes themselves—or *distraction*. Either seemed to work. Together, it was a sure-fire way to bring Deadpool out of his headspace.

“Whatever the boxes are saying can wait, Wade, we have to go home before Miles gets there and now it's gonna' take a *million* more years to make this stupid spaghetti because you wanted to go organic!” Peter throws his hands up in the air, walking past Wade, who has gone quiet and wide-eyed. “You coming or am I gonna' have to web you there? We're taking the roofs, too—I don't need any more people freaking out because you're in full gear! By the way, why *are* you in full-gear? Did you take another contract here in the city? You know what I said about doing that, Wade, if I catch wind of this I'm going to have to turn you in. Again. Deadpool, answer me!”

“Authoritative, are you, Spidey-hunk? There you go, giving me ideas again. And by ideas, I mean using your webs. In non-combat situations. *Specifically* in a domestic setting, like a bedroom...or a kitchen. Or an alley.”

“Right.”

“I meant bondage.”

Peter rubs his eyes, cheeks reddening. “I know. Please stop.”

“Like web-me-to-the-wall type of bondage.”

“Do not. I mean it, *don't* say it—!”

“And *fuck me hard—!*”

“I am leaving,” Peter shouts over him, covering his bright red ears and walking away while Deadpool cackles close behind.

He hopes he made the right choice by letting Wade into his life like this.

So, when Wade said he'd be there every day from six to eight, he wasn't kidding.

Sometimes he doesn't visit because he has a SHIELD job to take, but he makes sure to text Peter beforehand so he can buy out. So at least Peter knows he's serious about this whole dinner thing—and the ex-merc thing, because when he first took a job and called to alert Peter, Wade finally admitted that he'd been under SHIELD contract for the past year or so and he no longer took third-

party hit jobs. Or ‘freelanced,’ as he’d called it wistfully.

He was a SHIELD-hired assassin now which had *freaked* Peter the fuck out because *SHIELD EMPLOYEE IN HIS HOUSE* until Wade also told him they thought he was living in one of his safe-houses in Manhattan (which he wasn’t) because they were shit at tracking him, could only contact him via the shitty convenience store burner phone he carried around now because he let them.

It put Peter at ease, because secret identity, but also made him angry at himself for being such a huge, indecisive, dickbag about dating Wade. Yeah, he was still an assassin. But SHIELD wouldn’t allow him to take any other title because they needed to evaluate how he worked alone first before pairing him with a partner. So, at least there was a *chance* that Wade would eventually be transferred to a different sector in SHIELD. One day. Maybe. If he stopped antagonizing his coworkers and stopped breaking protocol by using his SHIELD-issued equipment to store pop-rocks and soda cans in it.

But it was a good first step. It meant that Wade wanted to change because *Peter* said he had the potential to—because *Peter* believed in him, gave him the time of day, didn’t kick him to the curb when he messed up, and that gave Wade the courage to try to be good again *and that did not make Peter all gooey inside, it didn’t.*

(It totally did).

(He also has *no* idea how he’s going to ask Wade out but Peter feels like it’s going to be like Gwen all over again—he’ll just watch from afar and clumsily talk his way around Wade until he noticed and put him out of his misery.)

The first two times Wade comes over for dinner, he barrel-rolls through his living room window, screeching about breakfast for dinner, and Peter breaks Wade’s arm out of instinct the first time.

He clings to the ceiling with Miles safely tucked behind him the second time.

Both times Deadpool laughs so hard, he cries.

Peter felt guilty for breaking Deadpool’s arm, though the merc only giggled and told him he could pay him back by letting him cook a few piles of pancakes.

Needless to say, after Miles got up and served himself seconds with a sparkle in his eye and a half-smile both times, Deadpool had been approved to cook all breakfast-related items by Peter.

The third time it happens, Peter only scowls at him from his sprawl on the couch and tells him barrel-rolling through the window isn’t cool a third time.

Miles always grinned when it happened, though.

So *maybe* Peter indulged Wade one last time, just to see Miles smile at it.

Whatever, no one could prove it.

The sixth time, Wade just jumps in through the window with a happy hum.

But Peter *does* put his foot down that time: no, they can't eat breakfast for dinner *every single night*, that's so unhealthy and, also, they have enough pancakes stuffed in their fridge to last them two weeks and Miles was getting up to eat them as a midnight snack, drenching them in so much syrup, he couldn't sleep. Again.

"Nice," Wade whispers, fist-bumping Miles while Peter crosses his arms, annoyed.

"No, *not* nice. He can't sleep because he has a sugar high! Do you know how many times I've been called this week because Miles keeps falling asleep on his desk?!"

"Same," Wade nods in solidarity, fist-bumping Miles again (who grins, that little twerp) while Peter rubs his eyes out and counts backwards from 10.

"Four, Deadpool. Four times. This is bad parenting, okay! And I refuse to be *that parent*. Not that I'm your, uh, parent or anything, *but still*. I'm taking care of you and-and there are *rules* in this household, okay?"

"Yes, sir," Miles says, dutifully, though his eyes have that glazed over look that tells Peter that he's tuning him out again.

"Miles! Did you hear me?" Peter snaps.

"Yeah, I did! I won't do it again," Miles insists.

"Yeesh, Parker. What *beef* do you have against being the cool parent?" Deadpool snorts, sliding closer to Miles and resting his elbow on top of his head. Miles giggles, trying to nudge out from beneath Deadpool's arm, but Deadpool only moves with him as he talks: "Relax, Spidey! He's just being a kid, y'know? Doing kid things. Like eating too much sugar and having the time of his life and then regretting it the next morning! It's normal!"

"Not so many times in a week it isn't!"

"Eh, fair. But look at him!" Deadpool croons, jumping behind Miles and picking him up under the arms to hold him out to Peter like he's some kind of over-sized plush. "Isn't he just *the cutest*? How can you say no to this face—OW! He *bit* me! What the *vanilla bean*! You sonofarocky road, ungh, wait til I get my hands on you and your spider fangs!" Deadpool growls playfully when he lets him go carefully.

"Mi..." Peter begins, then gives up when Miles dodges Wade's kick and sticks to the wall. "No rough-housing," he tries anyway. "Why do I even bother, you're both awful when you're together."

"You'll have to catch me first! Bet'cha can't, Wade!" Miles leaps onto the ceiling and blows him a raspberry, crawling along it until he disappears into the living room.

"Ohh, watch me, pipsqueak," Deadpool watches Miles go with a wide grin. "Well, that wasn't creepy *at all*."

“Y’know what? Fine. No more pancakes, Wade,” Peter flatly decides, ignoring Deadpool’s whiny grumblings as he goes back to wash the dishes. “And pick up all those banana peels before you leave tonight!”

“What banana peels?!”

Peter scowls down at the banana peel right by his foot. “WADE!”

“I don’t know what you’re talk—SHIT!”

Peter blows out a heavy breath when Miles bursts out laughing in the living room, Deadpool’s quiet groaning travelling to the kitchen.

"SWEAR JAR!" Miles screeches.

“I’m okay...ow, my back, get that jar away from me, I am *DISABLED*...stop laughing, youth, and call *Life Alert*...” he vaguely hears Deadpool wheeze out.

“They better be all off the floor when I get back out there! Seriously, that’s the lamest prank in the book. Miles can do better and he’s *nine*,” Peter mocks, biting his lip when Deadpool slips on another one when he tries to answer—and another one—and *another*, Miles laughing so hard that Peter knows he has to have tears in his eyes. “Loser.” With a hidden grin, Peter goes back to washing the dishes, basking in the combined laughter of his two favorite people in the world.

The fifteenth time Wade comes over, he decides to experiment a little more and cooks an assortment of Tex-Mex that has Miles nostalgic and quiet for hours after.

Peter has noticed that the longer Miles stayed in this world, the more hurt he’d be when he’s reminded of things from *his* world. It hadn’t been so bad in the beginning but the reality of it all seemed to just be sinking in and Peter doesn’t want to agitate Miles if he can help it.

So Wade doesn’t cook anymore Tex-Mex when Peter asks him to, with surprisingly no complaints. He’d picked up on Miles’ somberness, too, at the way he picked at the homemade salsa with a tortilla chip and then pushed his plate away and hid out in the bedroom.

Peter won’t admit it, much less to the overenthusiastic merc, but when he caught Deadpool rubbing Miles’ head when he said goodbye for the night, softly telling him it was okay to enjoy things he did with his family because *he’s* alive and he has to live that life, too, Peter decided he could trust Wade Wilson – *Deadpool, ex-mercenary turned SHIELD assassin* – wholeheartedly.

That had been a good evening, and when Peter had seen Wade out the window, he squeezed Wade’s shoulder in thanks but couldn’t quite avoid the full-on bear hug when Wade jumped on him happily.

(Not that he tries very hard to dodge whenever Wade hugs him.)

(But he *does* dodge the ass-gropes—because *dignity*.)

The twenty fifth time Wade comes over is Miles' birthday.

Peter would rather not remember that day, no matter how much Miles had smiled and laughed and talked about it constantly for the next week.

Honestly, that day still feels like a really bad acid trip.

Wade had *bust* into the party at the park without any notice, water-guns blazing, water balloons strapped to his utility belt like grenades, in a *stupid* panda suit screeching about birthday boys and the number 10 and CHOCOLATE FONDU FOUNTAINS—

And Peter had just been *so done* when a truck rolled up a minute later and carried with it a huge bouncy castle house complete with three slides and a Velcro wall. It wasn't even *hot* enough for a water-gun fight—winter was around the corner—but that didn't stop Miles or any of his invited friends from grabbing water balloons and water guns from Wade and going *absolutely insane*.

The kids were shooting each other with water and Miles grinned so brightly and widely that Peter's heart ached with fondness, even if he was horrified by the chaos Deadpool knowingly provoked. His cackling and shouts of war may have made matters worse, too.

And even though he *did* give the SHIELD assassin a quick hug after things settled down and Miles went to go play in the bouncy house, parents happily mingling by the park benches, Peter *distinctly* remembered whispering to Deadpool:

"If you *ever* wear that panda suit again, we're done—like, *officially done*," in a sickly sweet tone while Wade hummed thoughtfully, as if he hadn't just threatened to cut all ties with him, and quickly discarded the suit, kicking it behind him as if Peter *hadn't* noticed it. "I know exactly where that's from."

"What? Do not!"

"Yeah, I do," Peter had arched a brow, nodding at the back of the suit. "Next time, make sure to wipe the blood completely off when you use it for parties. No need to scare the parents—Miles made me promise no super business around his friends."

He'd never tell anyone, but Peter had stifled a grin with the back of his hand when he heard Wade whisper quietly, but with a lot of feeling, "*Oxiclean, you piece of shit.*"

The thirty ninth time, Peter leaves for patrol early but still doesn't return until nine. He hadn't had time to contact his usual babysitter, but since Wade invited himself over for dinner frequently enough, he always volunteered to babysit whenever Peter runs late. And he *always* runs late, but since there's food involved and Wade is actually a decent cook, Peter tries really hard to make it to dinner before running back out to finish his patrol if criminal activity is particularly, well, *active*.

He usually runs out for patrol various times during the night, since he has a police scanner installed in his mask. But when there's no real activity and it's late, he works on his thesis, classwork, or breaks into the university lab to conduct some lab tests to supplement his thesis. All work, no play.

Peter has never happier for online classes than he is currently—even if he hardly gets any sleep.

But being super-powered had its perks. Namely, he needs very little sleep to function.

That night, he finds Wade has made himself comfortable on his beat-up living room couch with Miles slumped beside him the same way he does with Peter, a blanket thrown over the both of them to keep out the late autumn chill. It would be getting very cold within the next few days so petty crime is usually at its lowest during this weather. Peter hopes he'll be able to spend more time with them once winter fully came around.

They were watching reruns of *Wheel of Fortune* on television, Wade making Miles laugh so hard with his ridiculous commentary that his voice is starting to go rough from overuse, Peter notices warmly.

Meaning: everything is A-okay with his two favorite people in the world.

Though, that night, Peter comes back a little worse for wear. Not that they notice.

At least, he *thought* they didn't when he landed on the fire escape outside of his apartment, but he did *sort of* trip through the window. And by tripped, Peter means fell face-first because his ribs flared up in agony when he leaned over.

So, no, they totally noticed.

"Hey, guy—ow, *popsicles!*"

"Hi, Peter! Um, are you okay?" Miles asks, warily.

"I'm okay! Yeah, totally fine! How about you? You doing alright? Because I am perfectly fine, never been better," he muffles out, picking himself up off the ground with a grunt.

Deadpool snorts, tossing some popcorn into his mouth and not moving his eyes away from the TV. "Hah. *Smooth as cream cheese*, Parker."

"Shut it, I don't need your sass."

"Everyone needs my ass. It's priceless."

"Swear jaaaar!" Miles shouts.

Wade groans, reaching into one of his suits pouches for a crumpled dollar. He tosses it at Miles carelessly while Peter snorts.

"*Garbage*, I think you mean," Peter says under his breath, grinning when Deadpool shoots him an affronted look.

"Are you *sure* you're okay? You keep falling over," Miles insists as he holds the dollar, frowning concernedly when Peter trips again on his way to the kitchen but catches himself with a sticky palm on the wall.

Deadpool's changing the channel but his head is tilted in Peter's direction, no longer eating popcorn like he's starved.

"I'm *fine*, just got hit once or twice, nothing out of the ordinary. Though I *may* have done way too many flips coming back, but cut me some slack. Webbing around the city is the only way I have fun nowadays," Peter says as he pulls off his mask, chugging down two whole bottles of water with some pain. Throat punches: they *hurt*. He just finishes slipping off his gloves and knee-high boots, placing them in a pile by the dining room table, when his spidey-sense goes off and he catches a full bottle of Percocet thrown his way. It looks new. When he looks at Wade, his head is

turned back to the television.

Miles watches the exchange curiously, but when he asks what he'd thrown Peter, Wade just tells him it's some big boy meds to get the boys pumping again and distracts Miles by going into a whole new tangent about some movie he saw once about sharks and a tornado.

Wade had noticed the rib injury, then.

Scary, scary assassin, Peter thinks with a silly smile, downing four pills in one go with a swig of water.

That night, Peter tosses a key ring at Wade after Miles is sent to bed, and pretends not to notice the excited gasp Wade lets out at the sight of the single key jangling against one of those dollar Spider-Man keychains.

"Oh my GOD!" Wade screeches, clutching the key in his fist. "Is this what I think it is?"

"Yeah," Peter clears his throat. "I thought it was about time I give you a key—"

"YOU'RE ASKING ME TO MOVE IN WITH YOU?!"

"Wha—*no!*" Peter sputters, a blush crawling on his face unbidden. Wade's grin widens. "I-I'm not asking, I mean, not that it'd be a *bad* thing, uh, no, wait—*dang it*, Wade, don't blow this out of proportion! I'm just *tired* of you coming in through the window, is all," he rubs the back of his neck, cheeks pink, heart pounding. Oh, man. It *does* kind of look like he's asking Wade to move in with him, doesn't it? God, he's such a nerd. He can't ask him out but he can give him a key to his apartment. *Smooth, Parker*. "I-I figured you probably deserve, uh, your own key now, y'know, so it's easier to get in and you don't have to pick your way in or anything... You're always welcome here," Peter adds with his patented adorable smile, which makes Wade sigh softly to himself, love-sickened and warm.

Not that Peter ever notices; he isn't just awkward, he's oblivious, too.

It works in Wade's favor.

"Spidey-babe, Spidey-cutie, Spidey-love, say no more, papa Deadpool understands," Wade says dramatically, clutching his heart. He ignores Peter's soft groan and face palm. "This is the *second best day of my life!*" Wade squeals, babbling about how the first best day of his life involved his ass when he swung past him all those years ago—or, *no*, it was that time at the crack-den where they had kissed—but Peter cuts him off before he can say anymore, not thinking too hard about how hot he feels under the collar or how Wade watches with a kind of wide-eyed curiosity.

"Wade! Focus! I'm trusting you with a key to my *home!* *Do not* lose it," Peter warns, pointing a firm finger at Wade, who squirms in his seat with delight. "I *will not* be making you another one. Do not let *anyone*, namely SHIELD, know about this. It's a one-time deal and they're not invited! You come through the *front door* unless it's an emergency," Peter says, firmly. "A *real emergency*, Wade, like someone is dying or dead or kidnapped or missing. Or New York is being invaded by aliens."

"Again!" Wade shouts, gleefully.

"Again," Peter sighs, regretfully.

And, surprisingly, though maybe it shouldn't be, Wade *does* use the front door from therein.

The seventy sixth time Wade drops by to cook dinner – *Italian* – Peter is super late *again* because he had been settling the last of the grueling adoption paperwork with Tony Stark – who watched him *smugly* the entire time, drinking his scotch *smugly*, telling him where to sign *smugly*, and being an overall *smug jerk* because he *knew* Peter couldn't just abandon a kid and had predicted he'd bond with the kid, too; Tony had him all figured out at this point, or at least JARVIS had a pretty explicit profile on him.

That had been a very long night.

Not including the long-string of ridiculous texts Wade had sent him steadily throughout the meeting the longer he took to get home.

Between Tony playing double-agent with SHIELD and some of the other superheroes in order to keep the identity of Miles Morales safe (because they already tried to dissect Peter, now involve an untrained ten-year-old boy? Nope), Peter was strung out by all the negotiations and failsafe's and responsibility he was adding to himself.

Because he liked pain, apparently.

In fact, Peter vividly remembers Tony's raised brows at one of his failsafe's, specifically his incredulous "*Please tell me that's just a typo*" when Peter wrote down *Wade Winston Wilson* as his emergency contact for Miles. Tony could think what he liked, he told him as much, but this was the best safety net Peter could think of because Wade actually *liked* Miles, took care of him, baby-sat him most days when he wasn't sent on a job and Peter had to patrol.

Deadpool was reliable and intelligent, an expert tracker, *superhumanly strong* with a healing factor that made most villains pale at the thought of, and he was *dangerous*. Not only that, but he had a military background—Special Forces—so he had a wide array of tactical and technical experience under his belt, which were all attributes that Peter benefited from in the event that something or *someone* decided to harm Miles. Sure, *Deadpool* was a mess of issues bundled into one, had more bad days than he'd liked to admit, but Peter still trusted him to act when he needed to. Namely, when Miles needed his help.

Tony reluctantly agreed after an hour of arguing, but not without warning him of how this could bite him in the ass later; but it hadn't mattered, Peter left feeling lighter than he had felt in a long time.

That cold night, Peter comes home to homemade pizza baking in the oven and a destroyed kitchen, Wade and Miles covered in sauce, burnt cheese, and flour, with both of them pointing at each other, yelling "HE DID IT!", and then babbling excuses simultaneously while Peter looks at the damage in dismay, coat falling off his arm and onto the flour-laden floor.

Then Peter feels laughter bubbling up his throat, because *was this what a family feels like?*

He laughs so hard that Wade's none-too-quiet mutter of, "Your arachnid parental unit is off his rocker, kid, sorry to say," doesn't even phase Peter.

This feels like family—like what he has always wanted for himself.

It feels like the times he had tried to cook chicken noodle soup for Aunt May and she caught him as he was desperately pouring over-salted soup down the drain, grinning from her perch by the

doorframe, rubbing her forehead, laughing after giving him a halfhearted scolding and helping him out with a warm, soft smile on her aged face.

For the first time in a long time, this feels like *home*.

The eighty first time Wade comes over for dinner, Peter actually takes a day off to spend time with his new make-shift family. And because he has big news. It takes him a few hours of mustering up the courage, but Peter eventually hands Miles the finalized adoption paperwork with only a slight tremble—one that Wade somehow sees. He nudges closer to Peter, thigh-to-thigh, shoulder-to-shoulder, while Miles wipes his mouth with the back of his hand and reads the paperwork, lips parting in awe.

“They’re adoption papers.”

Miles nods but he's quiet for a long moment, brushing his fingers over the government-seal at the top with wide but understanding eyes. “Does this mean,” he pauses, then continues with more conviction: “Are we a real family now? That's what this is, right?”

“Yeah,” Peter clears his throat, adding, “I mean, we’re recognized by the state as such. Not that—not that we *weren’t* a family before, I just mean, well. Yeah. I’ve adopted you officially which makes it easier on Mr. Stark and, well, *me*, since I’ve wanted to do this for a while now—I mean,” Peter fumbles, groaning to himself for being so bad at this. Wade grips his thigh in a silent act of comfort. It works. “I figured you’d like to keep your last name so I just hyphenated it, that way you can drop the ‘Parker’ whenever you’d like,” Peter assures, glancing to and away from Miles wide eyes. “I know I did this without consulting you about it first but there’s reasons for that, namely that Mr. Stark suggested that it would be in your best interest for me to legally adopt you since it would keep SHIELD off your back when they inevitably found out about it. I *wanted* to keep my real identity from SHIELD for as long as possible, but when they find out about you, they’ll know exactly who I am,” Peter admits.

“But if they know...” Miles begins, voice small, “That’s bad, right? That’s why sometimes Wade takes a long time to make dinner? Because he has to lead them on a chicken-run.”

“A chicken-run?” Peter blinks, looking at Wade, who’s visibly smiling despite his mask. “Is that what you’re calling it?”

“What? It’s true! Chickens can survive without their heads if you aim too high. So the lesson here is to *always* use a chainsaw, okay, Miles?”

“Okay, Wade.”

“*No one* will be beheading chickens, okay? So no chainsaws! We live in the city...nevermind,” Peter sighs sharply, ignoring Wade’s whispered *joykill* and Miles’ conspiring grin.

“About my secret identity. Is it bad? Yes and no. Yes, because I didn’t want them to find out. But that’s more because I don’t agree with their methods than because I find them an actual threat to my security anymore. No, because we’d be under Avenger protection since Mr. Stark did *technically* have legal guardianship over you and he had Dr. Banner conduct all necessary analysis and diagnostics when you were first found, so SHIELD would have to go through *them*, not *us* anymore. So it’s not a problem.”

“Wow, Stark’s actually pulling the ‘I found him first’ card?” Wade laughs.

Peter ignores him.

“So we’re okay?” Miles asks, perking up. “With all this, I can stay here now, right? I don’t have to leave?”

“Yeah. You can stay until you’re of legal age. I figured you’d be cool with it since your only other options were living with Mr. Stark, who’s awful with kids, or getting sent to some Young Avengers training program with the Black Widow, who is *definitely* awful with kids, and it seems like you like it here a lot so I just—!” Peter cuts off his nervous babble when Miles vaults over the table with a whoop, sticking to Peter as he full-body hugs him and part of Wade, squeezing so tightly Wade *has* to make a vagina comment but even that doesn’t stopped Peter from hugging Miles back just as tightly.

“Thanks,” Miles croaks out. “I really like it here! I’m happy that I can stay with you and Wade!”

No, I should be thanking you, Peter thinks with an overwhelming tenderness.

When he feels Wade move away, quiet as he always gets whenever Peter and Miles act remotely familial, Peter grips Wade’s wrist tightly, keeping him in place, his fingers digging into the soft leather of Wade’s suit and staying there long after Miles lets go of Peter.

“I cannot believe a ten-year-old beat me to taking your legal name,” Wade says when he can’t stand the happy silence anymore. “Wilson-Parker sounds *way* bet—!”

“Don’t ruin this for me,” Peter says as Miles enthusiastically serves himself more food.

“But—!”

“Nope.”

“I want—!”

“Nuh-uh.”

“*Just listen to me for a sec—!*”

“Hey, Miles, can you grab me a coke from the fridge?”

“Sure!”

“Argh!!” Wade whines, slamming his face on the tabletop.

Peter rubs his head a little when he starts to grumble and the night goes on as it usually does.

The one hundredth and fifteenth time is an interesting night for Peter since it’s the night Wade *finally* caves and admits that he’d been coaching Miles in self-defense. Peter had caught them more than once sneaking around, always making excuses when he came home a little bit earlier than usual.

At first, Peter didn’t think anything of it – just Wade and Miles being typical Wade and Miles,

getting into harmless trouble all on their own – but then Peter had found boxing gloves *just the size* of Miles’ fists, athletes tape, ice packs, and, well.

Let’s just say Peter can be *very* persuasive when it came to things regarding his *son*.

And, boy, does it feel *great* to be able to say that now.

“*Explain*,” Peter demands, holding out the boxing gloves. “And it better be good.”

“...Alright, you caught me. You found my stash of collectable boxing gloves. I just, I know I have a problem, okay, but I gotta’ *own them all*, you feel?”

“Try again,” Peter grits out, this time seizing one of the leather straps on his Deadpool suit. He drags him down to his height, hazel eyes furious. “I’ll give you a hint: don’t lie and maybe you’ll get to keep your jaw where it is.”

“HA,” Wade coughs out, looking anywhere but Peter’s very close face. “Don’t tempt me with a good time, Parker, you know how I am about bodily harm in the hands of a pretty boy.”

Peter picks him off the floor effortlessly with a sneer and Wade rushes to explain when his common sense tingles.

“WAIT! It has nothing to do with super-heroing, I promise, it’s *just* self-defense! Nothing more than that, I *swear*, babe! It’s just, *well*...Miles has this friend at school that’s always bein’ bullied and he didn’t know what to do about it! At first I told him to knock his teeth out and then I realized he didn’t even know how to properly punch a person, Spidey, it was ridiculous! No way could I let a Spider-brethren go out into the world without knowing how to throw a decent punch!” Wade explains rapidly, arms spread wide.

“He *should* have gone to the teacher for that,” Peter points out, not letting him go. “Or I could have if he told me.”

“Well, yeah, I told him that *after* the fact,” Wade snorts, as if it would have been ridiculous otherwise. Peter resists the urge to roll his eyes. “But one thing led to another and now your kid can pretty much kick Tin Can’s ass back to his privileged little cliff-side condo without ruining his nail polish!” Wade grins, smugly. No, *proudly*, Peter realizes. “Or he *will* once I’m through with him! I believe in him! Like that one ninja did to that other ninja in that one anime! *We all know the one*.”

Peter feels warmth bloom in his chest as Wade rambles on for a few more minutes about Miles’ training—how he had picked up fighting with difficulty, he was scared but he was overcoming that fear slowly, and his reflexes and instincts were not as developed as Peter’s, but Wade had great confidence they would be with more training; Miles was so determined, disciplined like Peter, all thanks to Peter really—

“But why didn’t he come to me for this?” Peter frowns, hurt but working it out in his head. His eyes dart to the bedroom, where he keeps his suit.

“Okay, this is gonna’ sting, baby boy, and I am not saying this to be an asshole, I promise, but Miles—!”

“...Doesn’t want to ask me because I’m Spider-Man,” Peter finishes for him softly, looking down. “Yeah. I figured.”

“...Y’know he doesn’t mean it, right?”

"I *know*, it's just..." Peter shrugs, helpless. Wade sways in his loosening grip. "It still sucks, is all. I'm supposed to be a hero but he can't even come to me when he needs help."

"Yeah. When you put it that way, it sounds horrible, but you gotta' look at it from his perspective," Wade says, reasonably. For once. "It may suck, but...just know that he doesn't hate you, Spidey, he could *never* hate you," Wade insists after a moment of fidgeting. "He loves you more than anything he's got right now, he's just...scared. He's *really* scared about what he can do, but he's trying really hard to overcome it and make you proud. He's told me, all he wants to do is make you proud. Which makes me proud but, y'know, what do I matter."

"You *do* matter," Peter tells him instantly, still looking at his bedroom door where his Spider-Man suit hangs. "You matter a lot more than you think you do, to both of us," he adds, very softly.

It's quiet for a second before Wade opens his mouth impulsively, talking rapidly about shitty people and villains and trauma that he understood, that's probably why Miles gravitated to him, he was super fucked up, Miles was pretty fucked up, but they found common ground in dead parents and friends and Wade could make anything funny so that was also why—

"Y'know," Peter says, abruptly. He feels Wade's eyes on him, his mask hiding his expression but the white of the eyes still comically wide. "One of the stipulations of my fostering Miles was to teach him how to...*be Spider-Man*, my successor. Like he had been before, in his universe," Peter whispers the last bit, his eyes darting to the unassuming bin set by the bookcase, where Peter had stored Miles' suit. "But he was so...terrified when I first brought him home. The idea of becoming a hero terrifies him like it *should* have terrified me. Heh," Peter's lips twist in a bitter smile. "Guess I'm too reckless for my own good. I took up the hero business pretty easily. I never let the consequences of being a hero get to me. I didn't think about them, honestly—I still don't, I still go out there every day knowing what could happen to me. I do stupid shit sometimes that people confuse with heroism. But Miles is much smarter than me in that respect," Peter continues, some pride seeping into his words. "He understands the dangers of becoming a hero, the sacrifices he has to make in order to become a great one. Those were things I didn't understand until—" *People started dying, one by one, all because of me, because I thought I could be a hero and a person* "—well.... Wade, he *trusts* you with this," Peter changes subjects, not about to go down that path. That path lied hell and this is already a lot to bear. He always knew he wouldn't be able to teach Miles *everything*, but still, fighting crime and being a hero is such a huge part of Peter's life and to think that he *can't* teach his own successor that.

Don't make this about you, Peter reminds himself resolutely. *This is about Miles, about a kid who lost everything because he took up the mantle of Spider-Man. If he feels more comfortable with Wade, then so be it. When he's ready, he'll come to me.*

"I want *you* to train him until he's ready to face Spider-Man," Peter catches Wade's eyes. He tightens his grip and Wade squeezes Peter's wrist as he dangles a foot off the ground still. "Teach him everything you know so he can defend himself and incapacitate others, but also remember that he's *ten* so go easy on him until he's a little older. I have a feeling you'll be mentoring him for a while—I won't officially allow him to go out in his suit until he's at least fifteen. Miles has a strong sense of what's right already, but I'll take care of teaching lawful and moral ethic over time."

Wade is already nodding his head vigorously. "No, yeah, yeah, I can do that! I promise!"

"I do have one condition," Peter adds. "*Do not* teach him that killing is the easiest option. If I find out you've *suggested* this, even in jest, Wade, while training him, I'll *relieve* you myself," Peter states icily, his hazel eyes going hard and frightening. "*Dying* isn't the worst thing that could

happen to a person.”

Wade stares, mouth agape.

“Do you understand?”

“I...thahhhh, wha’?” Wade stutters, mouth working around words helplessly.

“*Do you?*”

“Yes, sir.”

Peter’s cold gaze lift at the uncharacteristic quiet, the way Wade ducks his head all of a sudden. Peter lets him go when Wade taps his wrist frantically. He watches Wade sit himself down quickly on the couch, shifting awkwardly in his seat, crossing his leg.

“Wade, you alright? You’re acting weird. Well, weirder than usual.”

“YEAH. I just...had to come to terms with the fact that *that* was the sexiest threat I have *ever* gotten in *all* my lives and, trust me, I’ve died more times than anyone would believe—I’m basically Jesus at this point—but *Jesus Christ’s* sweet, holy balls, Spidey, I’d call you *Daddy* whenever you want!”

Peter’s stern façade breaks as he chokes back a loud laugh, bending over to cover another snort as his shoulders shake with mirth.

“You’re such an *idiot*, did you even listen to a thing I said?”

“Of course I did!” Wade scoffs, shifting forward. He keeps his legs firmly crossed. “I *always* listen when you talk, Spidey, it’s like my thing! To know everything about you! I am the go-to resource on everything Spider-Man related!” He pauses and adds teasingly, “And Peter Parker, I *guess*, but he’s kinda’ vanilla boring if you catch my drift.”

“Wha—didn’t you *just* say you’d call me Da—er, I mean, you know what you said!” Peter sputters, flushing when Wade grins knowingly. “Which is gross, by the way. Never call me that again. I’m kinkshaming you right now—I’m shutting that down.”

“Bah! Boorring! See what I’m talkin’ about? I bet Spidey would have been okay with it.”

“*No*, he wouldn’t,” Peter insists. “Because *I am* Spider-Man. I thought you knew. Well, *surprise!* I’m Spider-Man and Spider-Man says *no*.”

“Nuh-uh! You’re two different people—like, earlier, that was you channeling your inner Spidey, not Peter Parker! There’s a difference and that difference lies in sexual magnetism because *boy* does Peter Parker not have it...”

“*WADE!*”

“Oh, Spidey, take me now!”

“Just...promise me?” Peter asks, rubbing his temples. “Serious answer?”

“I promise! Pinky promise!” Wade holds out his pinky. Peter hooks them together and they shake on it. “Did you know that in the original pinky promise, if a person broke the agreement, they would lose their actual pinky?”

“No.”

“I’ll let you cut more than just my pinky if I break this promise,” Wade says, lightheartedly, but there’s something in his words that makes Peter think he’s being very serious.

“I could never seriously hurt you, Wade,” Peter says with a soft chuckle. “You always come back.”

“Ahh, I wouldn’t say that,” Wade mumbles with a sardonic laugh, standing up to grab a beer. “You can, you just don’t know it yet.”

“What do you—?”

“OHEMGEE! You bought wine coolers! Actual wine coolers. You fucking *NERD*,” Wade cackles, effectively distracting Peter as he bristles and defends his wine coolers from further disrespect because *wine coolers were great, okay?* They taste great and Peter likes them, fuck you very much.

Not that Wade is dissuaded, even if he totally drinks the entire pack Peter bought and makes stupid comments about Peter knowing how to treat ladies right.

Even so, Peter spends most of the night trying to figure out what Wade meant by that last statement, but comes up with nothing but improbable assumptions.

Peter doesn’t know it then, but ever since Wade walked into his life again, he hasn’t *once* thought about M.J. and that photo-frame on his bookcase. It hasn’t mattered to him like it did before; it’s become a reminder of things that had been, but were no longer.

But Wade thinks about it—he thinks about it *all the time*, finds his eyes darting to the picture-frame seated neatly on the bookcase whenever he watches TV, the picture reflecting a loving scene that Wade knows can’t ever happen to him. No matter his feelings, things in love never go Wade’s way—not in this universe, not in most universes if he’s being honest with himself.

But he figures the frame isn’t all bad, even if Wade will always be bitter about that red-head Peter loves, who dumped him so many times, who Peter keeps crawling back to because he loves so deeply. Like an idiot, but who’s Wade to judge? Here he is, playing house with him and acting as if it *doesn’t* hurt whenever Peter brushes off his advances, sends him an amused but otherwise unaffected look.

So, yeah. The picture-frame is appreciated.

It keeps him honest.

The two hundredth time Wade drops by the Parker household, Peter isn’t home.

“Hey, little dude, what’s crackin’?” He greets cheerfully, bringing take-out tonight since he’d been killed on a job just a day ago. Dying always takes a lot out of him. Aside from the fact that headshots with a .50 caliber took *forever* to heal, while he generally awakens within minutes of death, regeneration still takes a long-ass time so it always leaves him exhausted and moody for days to come. His memories are always scrambled when he’s shot in the head, too, so he always gives himself an extra day to recover before hopping over to visit Peter and Miles.

No need to worry them when he can’t remember how to open a bottle of beer because his memory

and motor functions are still shit.

“Wade! In here, *Terminator* is on TV!” Miles says excitedly, heading popping up from the edge of the couch.

“What? No way, that’s a classic! Did I miss Schwarzenegger struttin’ around in his birthday suit? Because that’s the only reason I watch this movie, tbh. That, and the *KILLER ROBOTS!*”

Miles giggles, but shakes his head. “It just started!”

“Sweet! Scooch, scooch! Speaking of suits, where is Spidey with the killer bod? Is he taking a dump? Did I finally catch him in the act?”

“Nope, Peter isn’t here! He’s visiting Aunt May!”

“That old fox, huh? Keeping her all to himself, that sly spider,” Wade hums out distractedly, slouching into the couch with a yawn. He hands Miles his plate of Thai food, taking out his own. He leaves Peter’s plate in the plastic bag and places it on the coffee table while they both eat. “He leave you here all to your lonesome or is that old hag here, too?”

“Mrs. D isn’t here,” Miles says, respectfully. Wade raises his brows; whoa, Peter had actually left Miles alone. That’s new. “But Peter left like five minutes ago because he said you were on your way. He said I was responsible enough to watch myself while you got here,” Miles adds, proudly.

“True. Good job on not dying or setting the place on fire, buddy,” Wade smiles, slurping down some noodles. “So. We’re alone. Probably for a long time, since Peter hasn’t visited his aunt in a while.”

“Yep!”

“...Wanna fuck some shit up?” Wade grins down at Miles, who gasps and punches Wade in the shoulder.

Hard.

Shit he really has to teach Miles to check his privilege. Softball really helps him with that but he still forgets when he’s at home.

“TWO DOLLARS IN THE SWEAR JAR!”

“Or *not* if you’re a bro and don’t tell Peter about it!” Wade whines, but he’s beyond amused inside. Peter takes that swear jar so seriously whenever Miles is home nowadays, even if Wade is usually the one filling it with cash since he can’t go a day without dropping at least six F-bombs.

“Nuh-uh!” Miles shakes his head, firmly. He hurries over to the kitchen counter, grabbing the jar and running back to stick it under Wade’s chin. “Two dollars, Wade! You know the rules! You can’t back out of them just because Peter isn’t here!”

“Peter would never even *know!*” Wade wheedles, but he’s already taking out his wallet from one of his pouches.

“I’d tell him because lying is wrong,” Miles says, gravely.

“Alright, alright, chill out, Spock, I know when I’m beat. Now, go put that back and let’s make a whole city out of Lego’s!”

“I don’t have enough Legos for that? We can make the Deathstar, though!”

“What? That’s *it*?” Wade gasps, horrified. “What the *biscuits* is Peter doing?! How could he have not bought you enough Legos to create a city from it! Unacceptable,” he declares, standing up. Miles watches wide-eyed as Wade plants a booted foot on the coffee table. “Come, my squire! TO THE LEGO STORE!”

“But I haven’t finished my dinner yet.”

“...Fine. Finish your dinner first. THEN, TO THE LEGO STORE!”

“HECK YEAH!” Miles whoops, flipping over the couch and grabbing his plate of food, gorging himself while Wade does the same. Peter will totally punch him in the gut for spilling rice everywhere but it’s a small price to pay for *Legos*.

“Eaaaat, my small spider, eat! LEGOS AWAIT US!” Wade says through a mouthful of food. Miles laughs giddily through a mouthful of food, too, and they finish in record time. Miles runs to his room to grab his winter coat while Wade waits, attention drawn to the TV when Arnold Schwarzenegger *finally* walks on screen naked as the day he was born. “Dat *ass*,” Wade whistles, cocking his head as he watches for a few seconds. “Eh. Peter’s ass is rounder, more to grab,” he decides in the end, uninterested again.

“DONE!” Miles runs back out. “Let’s go, let’s go! Can we go for ice-cream after?! I want COOKIE DOUGH! Can we?!”

“Awww, aren’t you just a tiny marshmallow of CUTE,” Wade sniggers. Miles makes a face, flailing his arms a bit.

“Peter won’t buy me a different one,” Miles complains. “It’s too big! I can barely move in it! I hate it!”

“But it’s warm! Don’t you know? Spiders curl up and die if they get too cold,” Wade says as they walk out into the hallway, locking the door behind him.

“Do not!”

“Do too!”

“Not!”

“Too!” He sends Peter a text with a ton of heart and smiley emoji’s once they’re on the street.

“NOT!”

“Too! I’m an adult, you will defer to me or no ice-cream,” Wade smirks, hailing down a cab.

“Peter says you’re a five-year-old,” Miles tells him, matter-of-factly. Wade scowls. Goddammit, Parker. “So you *defer* to me!” He tries the new word out, beaming at Wade hopefully when he successfully pronounces it right. Wade nearly coos at him, he’s just so cute when he tries to act like a big kid, but he has an argument to win so he only scrubs Miles’ afro down and goes on a long tangent on why five-year-olds deserve real respect in the world and Miles is still wrong.

Miles *eventually* defers to Wade, but he's pretty sure it's because he's more interested in his ice

cream than winning the argument.

That evening, Peter comes home to an *explosion* of Lego pieces all over the carpet and Wade and Miles passed out snoring with a couple of Lego sky scrapers and some smaller buildings between them. Four empty tubs of ice-cream are tossed behind them and Wade still has a spoon stuck in his mouth as he sleeps—all in all, it looks *ridiculous* and Peter has never been happier in his entire life.

He takes a photo of the wreckage and sends it to his Aunt May, since she demanded she know *everything* about Miles since he came clean with her that evening over dinner. She'd been annoyed but understanding when he spun her a tale about witness protection and child services but she wanted to meet Miles as soon as possible.

"Wade," Peter whispers, nudging him with his foot. Wade snorts but doesn't wake. "*Wade*," Peter tries again to no avail. He crouches, leaning over him. "Hey? Wade?" He stares into the blank white holes of the Deadpool mask, unsure if he's awake or just faking it. He leans in a little closer, tilting his head. His mask is pulled up to his nose so Peter can see his ruined skin, lips a little chapped but otherwise, well, *full* and Peter needs to stop staring at them before he does something stupid. Instead, Peter pulls the spoon out of Wade's mouth.

"...Put it back, I wasn't done with it yet."

Peter grins smugly down at Wade. "Ha. I knew you were awake. What's with all this? Did you buy out the Lego store or something while I was gone?"

"A kid *needs* enough Lego's to build his own empire, Spidey, god damn," Wade groans, sitting up. "Ow," he scowls when he leans his palm on a Lego piece by accident.

"Yeah, this is why I didn't buy Miles too many Lego pieces," Peter grins, wickedly. He casually walks up the wall, using the ceiling to walk to the bedroom while Wade glares up at him. "Good luck with that! Bring Miles to bed when you get out!"

"Wha—OW! Ow, what, *godfuckingshitwhatthell*—!"

"Swear jar," Miles yawns out sleepily, on his back, belly full. "No bad words!"

Wade stares at Miles in disbelief then drops his head back, groaning loudly. "*Shitake mushrooms!* I don't have any more change!"

"Then you're in debt starting from now!" Peter's voice comes from the bedroom. "Congrats, you can pay it back by picking up every single Lego piece in the living room all by yourself."

"I was gonna' do it *anyway*," Wade shoots back childishly.

"Sure you were. Hurry up, Miles was supposed to be in bed, like, an hour ago."

Miles giggles sleepily, burps, and is out like a light again by the time Wade gets his ass up off the floor and he can honestly say this is the happiest he's been in a very, *very* long time—stepping on Lego's and all.

He quietly hopes he can keep this small bit of happiness for a little longer as he tries not to permanently injure himself by stepping on Lego pieces.

The two hundred and fortieth time Wade drops by, Miles isn't home and Peter is nursing a beer as he scrolls through winter coats online.

"Honey, I'm hooome!"

"Kitchen," Peter says absently, long-since immune to Wade's domestic yammering's.

Peter can hear Wade unloading his weaponry in the living room, humming that new Drake song that was just released. Peter has half a thought to ask Wade to play the song for him; he isn't sure of the name, doesn't really care, he just hears the students at the labs talk about it when he drops in at reasonable hours.

"*Ohhh my god! I LOVE MY CROCS!*"

Peter raises unbelieving brows at that, but doesn't look up. "They're hideous and I don't know why you love them so much. You couldn't pay me enough to wear 'em," he takes a swig of his beer.

"Comfort, babe, *comfort!* You can never deny comfort," Wade insists, walking into the kitchen with his dark blue monstrosities on his socked feet. Peter only takes a longer swig of his beer; that's another thing he isn't going to fight him on. "What'cha been up to, *puddin'?*"

"Looking for winter coats," Peter mumbles, scrolling through the webpage with a slight frown. "Hey, do you think this coat with an added wind breaker is a good idea? It has three layers: a furred inner layer, added insulation, and this wind breaker that goes on top. It doesn't look too bulky and I like the color, but..." Peter squints at his screen while Wade shucks off his shoulder holsters. He hangs them up on the hook Peter nailed above the counter when Wade started coming over regularly. Wade usually just piled his guns, ammunition, and other weaponry by the couch, but Peter had caught Miles eying some of Wade's fancier armaments with curiosity once so Peter had demanded they buy a solid bin where Wade could just dump them in so Miles wouldn't be tempted.

Although Wade had bitched about it *very loudly*, he did bring a bin the next time he came over.

The side-arms, however, Peter and Wade had compromised on because Wade felt too naked, too vulnerable, without at least his handguns in sight and within his reach at all times. Peter respected his need to feel safe.

"You take the subway to work most of the time," Wade says, happily reaching into the fridge for tonight's dinner ingredients. He skips over to Peter's docked iPhone and scrolls through his music until he comes to his own playlist. Peter doesn't mind the music as Wade hums along. "Dunno' if you'd need it, baby, unless you're gonna' use it regularly."

"Hey, can you play that new Drake song?" Peter asks, smiling when Wade perks up and slides back to his iPhone.

"It's shit, but it's catchy shit," Wade snarks. "My boxes have been tossing around verses for a while—*shit* biscuits, I forgot the carrots! God *dam* my asshole, I even wrote it down on my *arm!*" Wade bemoans. "Oh my god, shut the fuck up, I told you to remind me, you literally had *one job!*"

Peter largely ignores this, squinting down at the webpage. "Nah, it's just for work. I have to commute further away since I got that lab position."

"So you did get the job."

“Yep. Found out this morning. Six to two every day. At least I get weekends off,” Peter mumbles, drinking his beer with more vigor. Wade tosses him another one. Peter pops the cap off with his thumb. “It’s not too bad. I’m back before Miles gets home, anyway.”

“How are you even still alive. Isn’t your thesis due like...next month?”

“I’ve still got two more months. Oh god,” Peter shuts his eyes at the thought. Wade grins. “No school talk when it’s Peter time! I don’t wanna’ think about that...I have no idea how I’m gonna’ finish it, I’m barely half-way through and my data is sort of shit because I need to put in more hours at the lab...”

“You work at a lab now!”

“Wrong type of lab,” Peter corrects absently, a coat catching his eye on his laptop. “Huh. This one’s nice.”

“Gross.”

“Shut up, it’s nice. It’s a nice brown color.”

“What, to match your catheter?”

“Um, rude. That’s ageism.”

“That’s reality, honey,” Wade snorts as he digs around the fridge for carrots. “Why do you need another coat anyway? You have a bazillion in your closet. You have more coats than real people clothes.”

“Most of those coats are for outings or professional events and they’re too bulky to commute in every day. Call Mrs. D and ask if she has carrots, Wade, put the knives down, you’re fine.”

“OH!” Wade remembers suddenly, setting down 23 knives from his mock-dramatic reenactment of Caesar and Brutus. “I KNOW THIS GREAT SITE—!”

“No.”

“*But—!*”

“I know what you’re going to say and *no*, Wade, they’re way too expensive! I’m on a budget, remember? I don’t start this new job until Thursday, and I already splurged on Miles’ coat and school supplies for the upcoming school year,” Peter reminds, cocking a brow at a pouting Wade. “I no longer have Mr. Stark’s backing on this. I’m doing this on my own salary.”

“Noo, you’re finally *my* sugar baby!”

“No, I’m not.”

“And we do sugar things, with my sugar money!”

“*Noo*, we don’t.”

“Right, sugar?” Wade claps his hands together before him, undeterred.

Peter sends him an unimpressed look. “Don’t ever call me that again.”

“Aw, baby, don’t be that way! Y’know that I mean well and will always love you just a little too

much! Because, baby, I'm a serial killaaaaa—!" Wade breaks out into song, bouncing over to the stove, turning it on along with the oven. "And I bought Miles some stuff, too! I pitched in, put in my two cents! I may be a Deadpool, but I am not a dead-*beat*!"

"No, no, you're wrong. You have absolutely no tone," Peter teases, snickering when Wade gasps. "Practically tone deaf. You might as well be deadbeat. Consider that for your next alias—the merc with no beat, *Deadbeat*."

"You take that back, Peter! That's beyond mean, that's just *inhumane*! I have a lovely singing voice. You can say it puts people to sleep."

"Permanently," Peter cheeks, and Wade flicks water at him with a delighted laugh.

"But remember what I got Miles? He was bragging about it for a whole week! I had the best gift! *I'm the fun parent!*" Wade shouts triumphantly.

Peter rolls his eyes, but he's still smiling. "Uh huh. Is that what we're calling it now, Mr. I-drank-a-whole-bottle-of-vodka-and-then-challenged-a-ten-year-old-to-a-Mario-Kart-race?"

"Hey, I would have totally won if the screen stopped spinning."

Peter snorts and keeps scrolling on his laptop. "Miles really did like the shoes and clothes you bought him. For someone who thinks puke green stripper heels are cute, you don't have a half-bad fashion taste for kids."

"Fuck yeah! My fashion taste is *bangin'*! *Gun in my purse, bitch, I came dressed to kill*," Wade sings as he digs through the cabinets for a pan. "Those sick new kicks of his are gonna' get him *all* the A's. Maybe I should have gotten him more socks, too—ooh, do you think he'd like fuzzy socks? I love fuzzy socks. I'm gonna get him fuzzy socks with widdle spiders on them! It'll be cute!"

"Still not the same. I make money the old fashioned way. By selling my labor to overpaid scum in a capitalist economy," Peter reminds dryly. "You make money *assassinating people*!"

"I do not!" Wade whines. At Peter's incredulous look, he adds: "I make money assassinating *Hydra agents* and other baddies for SHIELD, okay, it's more legal now and it's for a good cause! I'm done freelancing, alright, turned over a new leaf, yadda yadda, boom, profit!"

Peter presses his lips together. "Cool motive, still murder."

"Uh, I think you mean 'cool motive, thanks Deadpool, for keeping New York safe and out of Hydra's grubby little Nazi-hands, so please let me blow you in thanks for your awesome philanthropy'! Why, yes, thank you, Peter, I'll pencil you in for next week."

"Uh. No. I think I do mean 'cool motive, *you're still killing people for money, Deadpool, and that's WRONG!*' No blowjob for *anyone*."

"*Babe*," Wade slams his hand down on the counter, back turned to Peter, who startles at the sudden hard tone. Patience, Wade has that. Yeah. He can do this without getting kicked to the couch for the night. They are having a *great* time— just, not today. Today is *not* the day for the morality lecture for Deadpool. "Can we not have this talk right now? Please? Deadpool just got reamed out by his superiors earlier for a fuck up that wasn't even his fault, was out of his goddamn fucking hands, and is very, very tired right now. He'd just like to cook dinner and let Miles and you talk about how your day were because *mine* was absolute toilet water!" Wade hisses out, glowering at the kitchen knife in his hand. "God, Captain Sunny Patch Kids is a fucking asshole."

Peter wants to hold onto his annoyance, but it drains at the sight of Wade's tense shoulders, how his tone goes all bitter and hard at himself. The way he's holding a knife with something like regret and shame and—Wade never holds knives like they're foreign, it just isn't right. Peter never likes justifying Deadpool's actions because of how much he likes him, but Wade's right: this is a discussion for another time. "Alright, I just—I'm sorry. But I'll never be okay with it, y'know?"

"...Yeah, I know."

"But, you're trying really hard to get yourself back on the right track and signing that contract with SHIELD was a really good first step. I know that, and I appreciate it, how hard you're trying. I really do, Wade, I'm really proud of you," Peter watches the tense lines of Wade's shoulders relax a fraction, head ducking a little in the way that Peter now knows belied shyness. "...Do you wanna' talk about it later? We can watch *Shrek* and I'll even let you sing along," Peter asks, softly. "Wade?"

Wade grumbles under his breath to himself, but jerks his head in a yes. He snatches his cell phone from one of his pouches, dialing in a number sharply.

Peter leans against the table for a second, thinking, before his eyes light up with a good distraction. "They're imported from *Canada*, Wade, why would I want a Canadian coat? It'd smell like maple syrup and leaves."

Instantly, Wade loses all prior anxiety.

Distraction: key to improving Wade's overall disposition, something Peter is really good at.

"Ex-squeeze me, you say that like it's a bad thing! Canadian winter wear is the *only* acceptable kind of winter wear—*HI, MRS. D! This is Wade, I was wondering if you had some carrots to spare? I COMPLETELY forgot to go grocery shopping earlier today, busy, busy, y'know how it is*—and eeeverything they sell *here* is cheap as balls, fucking expensive, and a total, goddamn—*Thank you, ma'am! No, no, I can go pick them up, you don't have to—rip off!*" Wade directs at him without missing a beat, covering the mouthpiece with his palm as Mrs. D rambles on, blissfully ignorant. "At least if you pay big bucks for *one* coat in Canada, they last you for fucking ever, okay, listen—*Ohhh, if you insist, we're home so just knock! I'll be there in a jiffy! Bye, bye!*—I know what I'm talking about! I'm Canadian!" Wade hangs up the phone, expertly chopping up vegetables with his combat knife.

"Did you wash that?" Peter squints.

"Yes, my pretty, arachnid love!" Wade rolls his eyes. "Twice, with soap!"

"Hng," Peter relents, but only because he knows what Wade looks like when he lies about small stuff like this. "Oh, and Miles isn't going to be in tonight. He's sleeping over with a friend, I dropped him off earlier. I can text you the location if you want, but I scoped it out already and it's in a pretty good neighborhood. He's just four blocks away, honestly. He has his phone on him, though, if you want to make sure he's actually where he says he is. Miles also told me to tell you to save him a portion for when he comes home tomorrow," Peter says absently, but pauses when Wade stays quiet.

Peter is just about to ask what's wrong *now* when his neck prickles and he's suddenly very aware of the body that is standing directly behind him, the sturdy, muscled arms that cage Peter against the dining table. Peter's made aware of the fact that he's slouching, resting his chin on his hand, knee bent and hip cocked out in a lazy sprawl. He tenses for a second when Wade bends over him, resting his chin on Peter's shoulder, chest pressed against his back. Wade's mindful not to press his

crotch too close to his ass and Peter can't decide if he's annoyed or relieved that Wade offered him that courtesy.

"Sooo...we're alone?"

"Yesss?" Peter draws out, questioningly. "This isn't the first time this has happened?"

"This is true, but now writer lady has deemed that enough emotional development has happened between us for forceful, physical, interaction—wait, I mean just *physical*, there's nothing forceful about this—unless you want it to be, then I'm all for it, but if you're not then this is totally cool, *or* we can just cuddle up on the couch like we do when Miles is here," Wade babbles on, digging himself in deeper when he admits that maybe he's more into praise play than humiliation since his entire life is pretty much the dictionary definition of humiliating and that's when Peter has enough.

Wade's having a bad day and he isn't doing a very good job at hiding it. Whenever Wade has a Bad Day, he's touchier than usual.

Mostly because, and Peter is *kind of really sad* to know, he doesn't know how to ask for a hug so he overcompensates by being more grand in his gestures.

So Peter decides to save him the effort by pushing back, fitting himself against the hard lines of Wade's body, tilting his head back so he can rest it on Wade's shoulder.

"Stop," Peter says, softly. Wade does, instantly. "Your life isn't humiliating, Wade. It's just hard, and that's nothing to be ashamed of. You're trying your best and sometimes that's all that matters," he tells him gently, nudging back a little to offer comfort. Arms that were once playfully caging him wrap around his waist tightly for a second. Then, after a moment, one hand trails up the soft graphic t-shirt Peter's wearing until gloved fingers reached Peter's throat. He swallows, and Wade's fingers twitch.

After a loaded moment, Peter tilts his head back, quietly offering more, and Wade takes the opening, gently cradling his palm over Peter's thrumming pulse like it's something fragile, his large palm enveloping his throat. His other hand grips Peter's waist and there isn't a single way Peter can talk his way out of this one because *gray sweatpants are the worst thing to wear if you wanna' hide a stiffy*.

"You're right, though" he rasps out, despondently. "I could kill you."

"You won't."

"But I could. It's what I do best, y'know? Bang, bang, kill, kill...all I'm really good at."

"But you *won't*, because you're not a monster. You're good at a lot of things that don't involve killing, like cooking or reminding me to sleep because it's been two days and I'm actually dying," Peter reminds tenderly, drawing a soft huff of amusement from Wade. Win. "Yes, you've killed people. A lot of people. But you never killed indiscriminately. You *did* choose people that were *very bad*, that did some horrible things. I'm not saying it's right to kill, but I understand where you're coming from and—if things were different with me, if...I didn't have the people I did, it would have been really easy to do what you do," Peter admits, reaching up to take Wade's gloved hand in his.

Sometimes Wade needs to be reminded that he isn't a monster like everyone says he is; a lunatic mercenary; a psychokiller with no remorse, with no halt; an annoyance, unwanted, unlovable. Because he isn't any of that at all—he isn't *unhinged*, he's just very hurt, and everyone deserves to

be loved. He isn't *insane*, he's just ill and trying really hard to get better, and Peter will punch whoever called him that because that's so ableist and awful that Peter can't stand it. Like he can't stand when people whispered about Wade's skin when they ate in public.

"*Why are you so good to me?*" Wade whimpers, pressing his cheek against the side of his head, holding him tighter against his chest. His hand falls from his throat to Peter's chest so he can hug him tighter to himself and Peter lets him. Wade gives *the best* hugs because he just throws his *everything* into them—hugs Peter so tightly it feels *so nice*. Peter wishes he was as outgoing as Wade is sometimes because then he'd probably be able to get more hugs from Wade.

But, alas.

He's just awkward.

After a few moments, the atmosphere shifts, and Peter opens his eyes a little but doesn't move away when Wade's hand slides down to the old elastic of his sweats, teasing the edges as he murmurs about the benefits of spandex over cotton. With the way Wade is towering over Peter and how Peter is bent, back arching a little to fit against Wade, there isn't a single doubt in Peter's mind that Wade can see the growing evidence of their touching. He seems to be leaning towards cotton over spandex at the moment; *shocking*, but Peter knows Wade can be easily swayed sometimes.

Especially since Peter isn't even trying to hide his boner, for once.

Peter is kind of tired of pretending he *doesn't* want to date Wade for real.

Playing house is fun and all until Peter wants to be able to drag Wade down into bed with him at end of the day, throw a leg over his waist, pull him tight against his chest and wake up with Wade doing something absolutely ridiculous—like sleep talking nonsense, or scribbling on his face and arms with one of Miles' washable markers.

So, Peter lets him touch, arching into it with a soft groan. Wade's fingers dip down under the elastic, reaching down past his boxer briefs until Wade is grabbing a handful of his thigh like the stupid tease he is, massaging as Peter squirms under his ministrations, breath coming a little labored.

"*Wade*," Peter groans.

"*Relax*, baby," Wade husks into his ear. "Let me take care of you."

Peter is never one for nicknames, really, he's never used nicknames with his past partners unless it was ironically. But whenever Wade does, *god*, does Peter *love it*. Not that he'd ever admit it. Maybe. If Wade can melt his brain like he's doing now, Peter is sure he'll blurt it out because he's an actual human disaster.

"Miles with that friend of his, Gouache Lard?" Wade roughs out, pressing against Peter meaningfully. Peter stifles a moan at the sound, presses back and feels a shiver run down his arms when Wade's hard length grinds against his ass. Peter arches a little more when his fingertips scratched up his thigh thoughtfully, a faint smile ghosting his lips.

"Be *nice*, *Wade*, it's Ganke Lee. The Lee from this universe, anyway, Miles is thrill—*ed*," Peter gasps when Wade's free hand gently squeezes his jaw, parting his mouth slightly. Wade is a whole line of heat against his back, solid and comforting, and this time Peter's eyes are closed with pleasure, not mortification. "Wade..." Peter warns, a gloved fingertip pressing against his bottom lip. Peter parts his lips for him, letting Wade rub his lower lip thoughtfully. "The water is boiling."

“Not the only thing that’s *boiling* in here, is it, baby boy?” Wade purrs, and Peter grips Wade’s waist when he feels his hand edge closer to his dick. But there’s no way he’s going to let Wade reach home base without even touching first base; he’d *never* let Peter live it down and he doesn’t need to ironically be called *easy* for the rest of forever just because he’d been wanting Deadpool to get his hands on his dick for the longest time now.

He tenses his muscles and, knowing that would freeze Wade, takes advantage of the pause to reach up and tug his head down, turning to press his lips against Wade’s masked ones firmly.

“Lift up your mask,” Peter rushes out, feeling Wade exhale harshly through the material of the mask. Peter’s lip tick up when Wade hastens to, haphazardly tugging it off enough so Peter can slot their mouths together, take Wade’s jaw in his hand just as reverently as he had in that warehouse—let Wade know he has a chance (Peter turns so he’s facing him, a leg pushing between his thighs), he completely has a chance and Peter just took his sweet time in admitting it (he groans into the filthy kiss, and Wade grips his side tight enough to draw out another moan from him), so *please let Wade understand that Peter really, really actually lov—*

Knocking at the door is what stops anything else from happening—in fact, it startles Peter so bad, he had let his guard down *so much*, he ends up jumping back against the wall, staring down at Wade, flushed red and panting, shoulders rigid and ready for a fight, dick limp in a split second as he settles into fight mode.

Wade has a gun in his hand, somehow, even though he looks just as dazed as Peter feels.

“Whuhhhh?”

“Th-the door, Wade! Someone’s at the door!” Peter stutters, still a little dizzy.

“No wa—*NO WAY!* God fucking *shit*, I was sooo close!” Wade wails, slamming a fist on the tabletop in despair. Peter has no idea where the gun went but he sort of doesn’t want to know. “So close to having a handful of that sweet, thick *Spidey-cock—!*”

“WADE!” Peter shrieks when the knocking continues. “The *door, you idiot!*”

“I am going to *murder whoever the fuck is at that door—HI MRS. D!* What a pleasure, you have *IMPECCABLE* timing...”

Wade doesn’t murder Mrs. D but, later that night, after they finish eating and Wade whines enough that Peter orders a Canadian winter coat just to shut him up (and because they have it in his favorite color), they settle down on the couch together to watch *Shrek* as promised—and Peter curls into Wade’s side with an arm thrown over his waist comfortably, cheek pressed against his collarbone, while Wade talks about his bad no good horrible day, his right thumb rubbing soothing circles into Peter’s side because *he can* and this is the *best* idea Peter has ever had.

He even lets Wade grope his ass when Peter sprawls out on the couch.

It’s a *great* night.

During next few weeks, Miles notices how much closer Peter and Wade seem—how Wade always reaches for Peter’s hand and Peter doesn’t shake it off as fast anymore, holds on just seconds longer, sometimes doesn’t let go at all. Despite Miles having never seen Wade without the mask,

Miles can tell that the look that he sends Peter is an adoring one, can almost see eyes softening and melting every time Peter smiles, laughs, looks aggrieved at the thought of homework, even lectures him.

Miles sees that look the most whenever Peter is fussing over him in ways that his real dad never did—makes him feel warm and wanted unlike how his father made him feel. It makes Miles feel guilty some nights—*is that all it took for him to replace his real dad? Someone to be kind to him once, someone that painfully reminds him of his mom sometimes?*—but other nights he doesn't care because he can't remember anything else but his father and uncle telling him to break into that jewelry store, to take all those things, to *steal*. To abuse his powers because *he can* and that had scared him a lot, made his mom suffer a lot when she found out.

Those nights, he just wants Peter to always be there, to not leave like everyone else has because he doesn't want to feel that kind of loneliness ever again.

He wants to be good.

He doesn't ever want to sit up in a dark, strange, room and have no one to go to when his breathing gets fast and short, when the room narrows down to one single point and he feels like someone is gutting him open from the inside out, hands shaking, sweaty, with noises like grief gasping out of his mouth.

He thinks maybe Peter felt that way once, too.

Maybe that's why it felt so right to trust him the day he walked in and asked him to keep him company.

And, sometimes, Miles wonders if *Wade* is to Peter what Peter is to Miles.

If so, Miles thinks that evening, watching as Peter snores softly on the arm of the couch. Wade nudges Peter upright and pulls him into his side, where Peter proceeds to shove his face into Wade's armpit with a sleepy mumble. Wade chokes on a cackle, waving Miles over with a wicked grin and makes a photo-taking gesture. *If so*, then Miles doesn't mind adding Wade Wilson to his tiny, but growing list of family members.

"He's gonna be so mad when he wakes up," Miles whispers, handing over Wade's smartphone anyway.

"Not if he doesn't *know*," Wade snickers, gleefully. "Do me a solid and don't mention this until his birthday. I'm gonna make a compilation of embarrassing Peter pics and give it to him in an album in front of all his friends. It'll be *so worth it*."

Miles beams.

Yeah, he'd happily add Wade to his new family.

It's the four hundred and eighth night that Peter doesn't return home at all.

Not for a long time.

How it Ends

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

iii.

Now, Spider-Man is difficult to track down on a good day, much less actually *trap*. One thing Peter is immensely grateful for is his ability to contort and bend in nearly any one direction he pleases—he had tested out his flexibility the instant he realized he’d become super—which is why most of the times he’s been kidnapped or beaten unconscious, it’s generally because he’d been overwhelmed by a slew of enemies or someone had gotten a lucky shot.

His spidey-sense always alerts him of danger, *any* kind of danger, seconds before it can hurt him and he dodges out of reflex at this point so lucky shots were rare—as in, it’s only happened *once* and it’d been when he was just starting out as a hero.

As such, he never thought his spidey-sense would actually *fail him* at one point, but he’s *pretty sure* it has something to do with that mist he swung through on his way back home. Because that’s the last thing he remembers—swinging through a misty cloud and wondering if it came from a fog machine—before black overcame his vision and he awoke in *this* nightmare, however many hours later, with no clue as to who had abducted him or how he had gotten here.

It’s unsettling, is what he’s saying.

“Dammit. *C’mom*,” Peter grunts out, tugging his wrists against reinforced steel, clamps on either side of his head keeping him still and unable to look around. He’s tied down in every possible way, with steel straps holding down his torso and thighs; no way for him to move, to even wiggle around. This can only be from someone who knows him well, someone he’s met before. But Peter can’t think of anyone who’d pull out all the stops except Doc Oct, whose currently MIA, or...

Footsteps stop his squirming, and Peter thins his lips.

Awesome, just awesome. It’s just my luck that it’s HIM. Again. Jeez, when will I ever get a break? Tonight was movie night, too, ugh, Wade finally agreed to watch Beautiful Mind with me! It took me three months to convince him, too! No fair!

“Don’t you think this is a bit...much? I mean, you’ve always been excessive, but this is just overkill,” Peter says when the footsteps stop.

“Perhaps not enough, Peter. In my experience, you must be *completely subdued* for any damage to really come to your person. Or else you just heal, and continue on doing what you usually do,” Harry says, sounding unusually monotone, not a trace of anger or hatred in his voice like usual. “Get in my way.”

“I knew it,” Peter groans. “Are you serious? Don’t you have anything else to do in your spare time? How’d you even manage to get out of prison so fast, they put you in Tony’s special *raft* for the criminally insane. I don’t care what he says—it’s a fancy raft.”

Harry doesn’t reply.

That terrifies Peter and all his banter sort of dies on his tongue.

Harry *always* replies; he's volatile, he's always had a short-temper, and this is all too meticulously planned for it to be something *Harry Osborn* had concocted. As much as Harry is dangerous, he isn't exactly detail-oriented; it's something his father, Norman, had always criticized.

"You're not Harry," Peter states, confidently. As much as he hates to admit it, he does know his old best friend well.

"Not quite," another voice interrupts, a very familiar one. "But he is borne from the young Osborn's genetic makeup. Quite realistic, isn't he? He's one of my failed clones. He doesn't quite understand the spectrum of human emotion; he's absent of any emotions from what I have observed. A perfect superficial copy lacking all the fundamental attributes of what constitutes a human being."

New footsteps sound loudly in the dark expanse of the room Peter is kept in and his heart speeds up as chills race down his spine at their significance.

"Who are you? What do you want with me?"

"Now, Peter. I'd have thought you'd have a better memory than this," the man says, disappointed. "After all, you attended every single one of my classes without fault. Earned one of the highest marks in your class, really."

"Class? No, wait...P-Professor *Warren*?" Peter breathes out in disbelief. "What—what are you doing? Why would you do this?"

"You'll figure it out soon enough, don't worry, Peter," Professor Warren says, softly but the menace in his words has his spidey-sense on high alert, nearing painful in his head. "You were always a sharp student, meticulous and responsible. A *pleasure* in any classroom," he adds, distastefully.

"I don't understand, professor," Peter repeats, more forcefully. "*Why* are you doing this?"

"Why? I'll tell you very bluntly, none of this monologue nonsense. I have much to do and will not stand for any interruptions," Warren says, smoothly. "That night, eight years ago. In the clock tower. Do you remember?"

"Eight years ago...that was when Gwen..."

"That's right. The night Miss Stacy was tragically killed in a freak accident in that very clock tower. Skull fractured in various places, spine broken in two, among other injuries and contusions. But it was no accident, was it, Peter?"

"Of course it was! She wasn't supposed to die that night," Peter shouts, furious. "No one was! That was never my intention! What happened that night, it was...it wasn't supposed to happen but—!"

"But *she did*! She died, and it was all *your* doing—all your *fault*! But you don't think it is, do you? I can hear it in your tone. Oh, *no*," Warren sneers, leaning over Peter's face all of a sudden, his eyes dark and manic behind his glasses. He looks older than Peter remembers; worn and exhausted in ways that frighten him. "Peter Parker. *Spider-Man*. Beloved hero of New York City one day, a menace the next. How beloved will you still be when I test out my modified Symbiote formula on you? When you decide...*all creatures are your enemy*?" He presses a finger against the rapid pulse point on Peter's wrist, revels in the helplessness on the hero's face, the way Peter flexes his arm but doesn't even make the bracelets nudge. "But first I must weaken your defenses, so to speak... make you so vulnerable you'll *want* to tear every single person in your path apart. That takes time,

which is why we're starting immediately."

"You haven't answered my question, Warren!" Peter shouts, trying his best to break out of his constraints but the metal doesn't curl in itself one bit.

"I'm doing this for Miss Stacy, of course," is the icy reply. "Because of what you did to her, and what you refused to do after her death."

"What I *refused* to do?" Peter sputters, indignant. "This is about—what are you even *talking* about? None of this makes sense—your revenge plot is baseless! There was *nothing* I could have done after she died! I tried to stop being Spider-Man, but that wasn't helping anyone. Crime was still happening, more people were dying, and Gwen...Gwen wouldn't have wanted me to stop protecting this city," Peter shuts his eyes, takes a breath; steadies himself, because Gwen's memory doesn't hurt him like it used to. Not anymore. He's stronger now—stronger because of Wade, because Wade is like a balm to that hurt, tender thing inside himself he called *lover*. "I loved Gwen."

"*AND SO DID I!*"

Peter freezes.

"But while you wept and remained pitiful, I *grieved* and took initiative. I had to *hold back*...I had to learn *restraint*," Warren continues as he paces around Peter like a caged animal, voice barely containing his rage. "I learned that if I ever wanted to make you pay for what you did to her, I needed to plan out my every move. I needed to study you in order to defeat you but that took *time* and *patience*. But all was made easier when I identified you; then, it was all a matter of timing."

"So I was right. That's what this is about," Peter grits out. "Revenge. You're trying to say that I killed her *on purpose*?"

"Didn't you?"

"Of course not! I was trying to *save her*! I told her to go when it became apparent that the Green Goblin was too unpredictable for me to keep an eye on her, but she wanted to help and she *did*, she was so smart—she helped me, but I couldn't have anticipated that the Green Goblin would push her off the ledge. I tried to save her but my webs...they didn't reach her in time and with the speed of the fall...by the time my webs reached her, there was no way she could have survived even if she hadn't hit the ground! It was my fault, but *never* my intention!"

"No. No, no, no, you're not going to talk your way out of this one like you do in class. *You let her die, Peter Parker*," Warren hisses, suddenly close, spraying spittle on Peter's cheek. "It was *your fault*, all your fault that she's gone now. But, *no*," he cuts himself off, voice losing that manic edge, taking on a more methodical one. "No, now, I'll make you pay. I'll avenge Ms. Stacy in the way you never could. The Green Goblin is no more. He's paid for what he's done."

Peter's heart drops. He tries harder to escape his bounds. "Harry, no...what did you do to him?! WARREN!"

"Shh. Soon," Warren leans over Peter again, those vacant but obsessive eyes sending chills of terror through Peter. "You'll be gone, too. But not in the way she is or the way Mr. Osborne is, rather in a much more...*unpleasant* way."

"What are you going to do to me?"

"Something worse," Warren promises.

He disappears from sight and Peter hisses when he feels a needle prick his neck.

“What have you done?!” Peter shouts, hands shaking. “Warren? WARREN! Answer me! What did you to Harry?” Because no matter how much Peter loathes Harry for what he’s become, for what he’s done, Peter still couldn’t bring himself to put an end to the Green Goblin. “WARREN!”

Peter remembers screaming more, becoming more and more frantic as his spidey sense caused a migraine, made his reflexes and senses sensitive and sent his body into flight mode. Whatever he was injected with, it worked quickly, but Peter still remembers hearing Warren typing quickly on a keyboard, flicking on switches, hearing him softly hum under his breath like he wasn’t about to torture Peter within an inch of his life.

Peter will remember that soft humming for *years*.

When he wakes up again, it’s like clockwork.

He wakes up, he’s sedated.

He wakes up again, he’s injected with some thick gunk that keeps searing his veins, sickening him with every jab. One jab, one hour. Different body part. One jab, one hour.

Sedation and pain in a meticulous cycle.

That’s how he tells time, now.

Then Warren becomes creative with his torture.

The jabbing doesn’t slow—it continues to drag on, but he hears Warren flip a switch in his office and a familiar voice rings into the void he’s kept in:

“Hahaha, Peter, stop it! You’re going to cause a scene,” Gwen giggles happily, her laughter bubbly and all things bright and it *hurts* him worse than any physical torture.

And it doesn’t stop.

It’s her voice—*Gwen, Gwen and her laughter* on loop—over and over and over again until he just wants it to stop, in whatever way, just *stop*, he can’t take it.

Laughing, laughing, laughing—and the jabs grow later and later. Two hours, then four, then eight.

There isn’t any sedation anymore, just this low-grade pain that makes him feel like he’s going through a painful fever.

And her laughter keeps ringing in his ears.

It’s dark, too—freezing, enough that Peter doesn’t think he’ll ever be warm again.

Gwen says his name in that perky, happy way she always did— and then she laughs and laughs and laughs.

The cold seeps into his skin, carries in his blood, and sinks into his bones like a dead weight.

Like he'll be, soon.

He doesn't know how much time has passed anymore.

It's just a long stream of low-grade agony and Gwen's laughter ringing high and mocking in his ear.

After a while, he doesn't care how much time has passed; he can't hear anything anymore, only a continuous drip, drip, dropping that makes Peter think this is what it feels like to go unhinged.

Drip, drip. *Drop.*

Laugh.

Drip, drip. *Drop.*

Laugh.

Drip.

When it's finally quiet, when his blood stops feeling like flames licking his bones and his hands stop shaking and he stops sweating cold, it's not a relief; it's a nightmare all on its own because he can still hear her laughter ghosting his ear.

The quiet hurts more than her laughter.

And it's quiet and still for a long time, and that fills Peter with a nauseating terror because he doesn't know what's going to follow next.

At some point, there's a final jab in his neck, a long one, and it doesn't burn so much as it feels as if he was just injected with glue.

"It'll be over soon, Peter," Warren says, a faraway voice.

"Screw you."

There's no laughter, only the feeling of sludge making its way through his veins as his eyes cross and he goes unconscious.

Then, there's a voice.

Let go.

Peter knows he can't. But he can feel the vitriol that's infected him, like grime covering his skin, greasy and slick, contaminating his everything.

In the background, there's dripping.

His fingers dig into the metal, skin damp, hair plastered to his forehead.

He'd do anything to make that dripping sound stop.

Come—let go. We can benefit from one another—become stronger, better than what you are right now.

With great power comes great responsibility—Peter knows the spiel, knows the dangers of acquiring too much power too fast. He remembers his own rampant irresponsibility when he acquired his own powers, had watched his uncle die and then watched him die again in every single nightmare he's had. He's watched his powers and his actions result in the death of Gwen Stacy and Officer Stacy; watched as they endangered Mary Jane and Aunt May more times than he can think of; watched them sever the friendship between him and Harry to the point where they threw punches that aimed to kill—even Peter can't lie well enough to himself and say he cared about saving Harry after Gwen's death.

Everyone can be saved, yes, but only by those willing. It isn't his right to kill a person, yes, but it's always a point of shame for Peter when he thinks about how he no longer *wants* to save Harry, can't look into his eyes because all he sees reflected is Gwen's crumpled face when she realized Peter wouldn't be able to save her on time.

He doesn't know what Warren has done to Harry; it does leave a bitter taste in his mouth to know that perhaps Harry really is *dead* now, but there's also a relief that comes with knowing he's gone and Peter is disgusted at himself for even thinking it.

But the relief that Miles will be safer now that Harry is gone is just a little bit stronger.

Peter has lost too many people as it is.

But with me, you can save the boy—Miles, you can save him from anything if you let me grant you access to this power. He's weak, he can't protect himself yet, you've said it yourself. Look at you, trapped on this miserable slab, at the mercy of anyone. Who's protecting Miles?

Deadpool. Wade, of course. Peter doesn't doubt this; no matter how long he's been missing, how long he's away, if he *dies* under Warren's torment, Peter *knows* Wade will protect and care for Miles in his absence. He still doesn't know what they mean to each other. They've never spoken about it, only indulged in heated touches and late-night whispers between one another when the mood is right, but Peter *does* know that Wade cares for Miles, enough that he'd take over should something *happen* to him—their *whatever they are* be damned.

But do YOU want to leave the boy? All alone? He'd lose his family again. It would be your fault, again. You chose to get closer to him. You gave him a taste of what it means to have family again, and now you're ripping that away from him?

No—no, he doesn't—that's something Peter would *never* do. He never intended for that. He just wanted Miles to be *happy*. He *wants* Miles to be happy but this, well, *this*—

It would kill him, the voice hisses, and Peter grits his teeth as that vitriolic sludge oozes through his

veins even faster. He can hear his heart in his head, feel it pounding at his temples, and he's so hyperaware of his body, just his body, everything else is curiously absent—no cold, no laughter, no dark, nothing—and Peter unclenches his jaw, teeth aching, to scream when that fluid suddenly courses stronger. He's so weak, he can't really feel his hands or feet and his muscles are sore from keeping them tensed so long.

It would be your fault. It's in your best interest to let me take over. You can't do this alone, and I will ensure the safety of the boy. Something you can't do—you couldn't even do it for your girlfriend, she's dead now. And your second one? Gone. Because you're too weak to protect them.

Even you can't protect Wade from the criticism of others—you were one of those critics. How can you possibly do anything for him?

He'll leave you, too, when he's had his fun.

Peter feels the steel warp under his strain, his voice hoarse, hysterical and gut-piercingly loud. He pushes against the steel bracelets and the sudden weight on his chest, his stomach, his legs. His blood burns; it's like fire, his skin feels like it's being torn with brutal fingers, pinched open and bruised and ripped and sewed back together again. It's worse than the needles, this is worse than anything Warren had done to him. What has he done to him? Sludge dips down his skin, covering it, hot to the touch, and Peter thrashes on the gurney.

I can do a better job and you know it.

“Sto—STOP IT! YOU CAN'T!” Peter hears himself scream as if he's submerged underwater. Muffled, every protest and cry and shriek becomes more and more panicked with every shadowy echo of every doubt, insecurity, and anguish Peter has managed to keep under watch. The burning grinds to a halt and the shadowy voice hisses triumphantly, reacts, and Peter feels his left arm break the shackle and grab someone—but he doesn't know who, just knows he feels frighteningly detached from his body but he *needs* to stop because he promised Miles he'd come back and with that thought, he *does* stop.

He feels that viscous ooze retract from his skin like something peeling off. The shadowy voice hisses violently at the mental block, muffled now all of a sudden, with Peter's thoughts popping like pressure until sound comes hitting him all at once from all directions. “Ar—ARGGHH,” Peter screams, clutching his head with his free arm, tearing the metal from his other to cover his head, clench his eyes tightly closed and just breathe with his head between his legs.

“Peter—is that you now? Are you okay? Can you hear me? It's me, Steve!”

“Now's not the time to be getting chummy with the science experiment, Cap!”

“Tony!”

Who was shouting in his *ear*? God that hurt so bad, it felt like someone was literally screaming into his eardrums.

“Stop—stop—too loud, too much—!” Peter gasps, flinching away from the touch. There's a wailing that's piercing his brain, it's loud and just “*Too much!*” He can hear traffic, he can hear hundreds of voices at one time, televisions, radio static, *everything*, it's like when he first got his powers but dialed up to twenty now. Laughter, god, he hears woman's laughter—nonono.

“*Please*. God, it's all—too much,” Peter whimpers and then arms are encasing him, he can feel every single textured surface of the person's suit, and Wade's scent hits him like a freight train,

enveloping him and inexplicably calming him. Peter focuses on just Wade, tries to reign in his senses to just *Wade Wilson* and the way he's embracing him, holding his arms down so he doesn't hurt himself again, breathing shallowly, his hands clutching his bare back tightly, hiding his face in Peter's sweaty hair while Peter presses his nose into Wade's shoulder and tries not to get distracted by the other voices, footsteps, *people*, in the room with him.

Tony is here.

So is Bruce, and Steve.

Clint.

Natasha.

There seems to be no one else; he can't hear Professor Warren anymore. SHIELD agents, further out. Other indiscernible voices, alarmed and vicious at turns, more sirens but he's able to tune that out now that Wade has become his central focus. He seems to be contained to a room. Large room, it's cavernous and every single noise within it is very loud in his ears.

Right. Yeah. He was kidnapped. Warren tortured him.

Yeah.

How much time has passed? Peter thinks distantly, his muscles shaking from exertion. Wade is mostly holding his weight. *What day is it? What did he do to me?*

"He bonded with the Symbiote," Bruce murmurs very softly, and Peter tenses. Wade tightens his hold. "But not completely."

"He bonded with the *what now!?*" Wade hisses.

Peter flinches, head pounding.

"Not so loud," Bruce warns, very softly still. "Peter is...*has*... undergone some mutations as a result of him bonding with the Symbiote at such a base level. Tony?"

"Yep. That's Venom. Or what's left of it," Tony grimaces, stepping closer to Peter. "SHIELD has been looking for it for *years*, ever since it bonded with one of their agents. But whatever this is now, it isn't the Venom we knew a few years back. It's been mutilated, irreparably given the way it couldn't take-over Peter despite how weakened he is."

"Wasn't Venom operating at an external level as well?" Steve asks, stepping up beside Tony. "Like a film over the skin? A suit?"

"Yeah, not anymore, seems like," Tony peers down at Peter, who's clutching onto Wade tightly. He can see black pulse in the back of his spine every time Peter inhales too sharply. "How's it feel to be hosting a feral alien, Pete's?"

"Tony," Steve warns.

"What? Totally curious question. It isn't often we get to see what happens when you artificially bond part of a Symbiote *underneath* the dermis."

"Professor Warren has been busy," Bruce acknowledges. "But it hasn't been long enough for the bond to take psychically, if it even can at this point—the Symbiote doesn't seem to have full

control of its host. If at all. Whatever Warren did, Venom is as good as dead if we remove it from Peter.”

“So what does that mean for Spider-Man?” Clint asks, looking at Peter with concern. “Is the kid gonna’ be alright?”

“We can still break the bond. Should be easy as pie, really,” Tony dismisses, going through some files in his hands quickly. “With some side-effects, y’know, but the normal kind. The kind we can fix, if needed. All in all, Venom is still a Symbiote who now *needs* a host to live. Think of Pete as a good old fashioned life support system. He’s the only thing keeping Venom alive at this point. We’ll run some diagnostics to see how the bond affected Peter back at the Tower, but I’m putting my money on the artificial bond just jump-starting some dormant mutations that Peter already had as a result of the spider that bit him. It’s in the research, kiddos, should’ve done your homework the night before like I did.”

“Right,” Steve says, smiling wryly. “But first, we need to get Peter out of here.”

Throughout all this, Wade clutches Peter to his chest tightly and croons gently in his ear, whispering about it all almost being over, how he missed him so, *so* much he thought he’d go insane from it and he’s already crazy so can Peter believe how much crazier Wade could get? Wade tells Peter they’ll go to the Tower soon so he can get better and then Peter can go home and they can snuggle on the couch for like three days straight and, *oh*, Miles, too, didn’t he know? Miles got an A on his exam last week, Wade continues to whisper rapidly in his ear, Peter would have been proud so Wade put it up on the fridge for when he came back. He’s done so well despite Peter not being there; he’d be so proud. Miles trained really hard when they found out what happened and he even accompanied Wade while he searched for him and he helped Wade patrol the city while he was gone and Miles is going to be so *happy* when Peter’s back home.

Yet Peter can hear how rapidly Wade’s heart is beating throughout this dialogue—it’s like Wade is running a marathon, it’s so loud and strong, but it isn’t unpleasant. Peter listens to his heart more than his words. He buries his face in Wade’s collarbone and tries not to think about the voice that’s slinking about in his mindscape, waiting for a breach. Venom, he’s heard about that creature. He’s a Symbiote, a type of alien, parasitic, creature that took over its host by manipulating their psych at a base level. Steve was right, it generally operated externally, not internally. Tony had brought in some files once, asked his opinion on it while Bruce wiped off his glasses in the background, and Peter had been fascinated by the creature that was able to *completely integrate* into an organism’s genetic makeup if given long enough to bond—

How long has it been? Peter thinks, his stomach plunging to his feet.

In the back of his mind, Venom cackles.

“He did this,” Peter speaks, rough and quiet, and all conversation pauses. “He wanted to change me. It was my fault, Gwen died because I couldn’t... This is revenge. He said he wanted to inspire fear in the people when they saw Spider-Man...rampaging,” Peter rasps out, fists clenched until his knuckles whitened.

“Who, Peter?” Steve demands.

“Professor Warren. He wanted me...”

“He wanted to turn you into a monster so New York would lose faith in Spider-Man. Ruin you,” Wade finishes for him, tone matching Venom in violence. Peter clutches onto him tighter; he doesn’t like it, he can feel his breathing come in short and sharp again. Cold sweat breaks out on

his forehead. “Why the *fuck* didn’t you let me kill that sonofabitch when I had the chance, Stark?”

“It wasn’t our call to make,” although Tony looks like he’s sorely regretting that decision. “We operate under SHIELD now so we had to—!”

“Fuck SHIELD! Look at what he did to *my Peter!*” Wade snarls. “I’ll kill him myself! Where is that sonofabitch?!”

“Wade,” Peter begs. He stiffens and looks down. The terrible hatred Peter can see through his mask softens instantly at the sight of exhausted, bloodshot, hazel eyes. “You can’t. *I can’t.*”

That’s enough to make Wade stop, becoming so still one would mistake him for a statue. When he speaks again, it’s not to Peter, and it’s rough and low. Black Widow stiffens. Beside her, Hawkeye reaches for an arrow. “You hide him. You hear me, Stark? You *hide him good*, because I’m a go *looking*, and when I find him, I’ll *tear him apart* and throw every goddamn organ, finger, and *slice of skin* into the river,” Deadpool promises savagely, bending down to pick up Peter.

“Deadpool,” Natasha commands, voice sharp like a whip. Peter resists flinching at the frequency. “Where are you taking him? You were ordered to follow all direction if you were to undertake this mission with us. No one gave you an order to leave.”

“Where do you *think* I’m going, you Russian bitch? *The Tower*. While all you asshats are busy talking about Peter like he’s some kind of fun science experiment, you’re forgetting that *he’s injured* and hasn’t been eating or drinking properly for *weeks!* He needs medical attention, not a fucking theory course,” Deadpool snarls. Bruce gives him a wide breadth, holding a hand to Clint’s notched bow as Deadpool walks away from the cold, dank basement Peter had been kept in for the past month and a half.

“That’s a dismissal if I ever heard one,” Tony blows out breath, running a hand through his hair.

“Deadpool’s right,” Bruce says, already packing all the files they managed to collect while Professor Warren had been busy warding off Natasha before. “We need to forcefully expel the Symbiote from Peter’s body before it has a chance to completely integrate into his genetic makeup. We were lucky—Warren exposed Peter to the Symbiote a few days ago and he altered Venom. Took him apart, somehow, it’s all here in his research—but I say we have another twenty-four hours before it’s too late, maybe less considering the Symbiote was injected *into* Peter’s body,” Bruce glances over to Tony, who’s already muttering something to JARVIS and scrolling through a large set of text in his screen. “And he’s already very weak as it is. Warren had to make sure he was weak enough to take the creature.”

“We better get going then. I have a plan, but you’re not going to like it. JARVIS, we’re expecting a guest, bring all emergency personnel to the Tower pronto.”

Bruce sighed, but when was anything ever a good idea with Tony?

He’s right—*no one* likes the plan.

“We can’t just *blast* jingle bells at top volume in hopes that the *blob* will skedaddle out of Peter’s body! He can’t even take us talking at a regular level without feeling like he’s dying! What the fuck, Stark?!” Deadpool argues, waving his arms frantically. Beside him, Miles is silent, dressed in his Spider-Man suit. Peter noticed when Miles first rushed in after he had been placed on the floor in the glass cell by Wade.

That was two hours ago.

Now, Peter sits pressed against the corner of the glass containment cell, feeling his head spin and his breath shallow with every minute. He can't let himself focus on what's happening around him for too long or else Venom comes back with a vengeance, trying to get him to let down his guard enough for him to take over. But Miles—god, he missed Miles donning the suit. How could he? He was so excited for the day that Miles would try on that suit, but then he was *taken* and the jabs and humming, god, the *humming*—*what am I...what was I talking about again?*

You can't even focus—you're pathetic, Parker.

"Fuck off," Peter mumbles, and ignores the odd looks Bruce and Steve toss his way at the words.

Look at you, you couldn't defend yourself even if you tried.

"Defending myself pretty well against you, aren't I?" Peter croaks out, shutting his eyes when he feels a sharp pain lance through them. "Stop it. That's annoying."

Not as annoying as it'll be once I come into my true power. Once I have reached the height of my full potential, then you'll fear me. You'll fear what you'll become—just another part of me, watching as I destroy your life and build a new one from its ruins.

"God, who did you bond with before? Taskmaster? You're preachier than Tony when he's going off about some new gadget he made," Peter chuckles roughly, pain making him pull a face. Venom growls, and Peter can feel his bloodlust. "Oh, we'll see about that. Not doing so hot?"

For now.

"Starting to sound more like me—who's really being taken over, huh?"

"Noooo, Petey!" Wade suddenly wails. Sound is muffled within the containment cell, but Peter hears enough to know what's going on if he focuses. "Only *I* can talk to myself! It's my only shtick, baby, don't take this away from me! Then what will I have to bring to the table?!"

"Trust me, you can keep it," Peter grinds out and then goes to lay on his side when the ache comes back, clutching his head. Venom's taunting him again, laughing, always laughing *just like her*—"Stop—*shut up, just shut up, stop it, don't laugh like her—!*" and he tries not to let the sudden frantic movements outside of the glass containment cell get to him. He tries not to notice how still Miles is, how he steps forward and puts a hand on the glass. He hasn't said a word since he walked in and Peter worries over *why* Miles donned the suit and what happened while he had been captive. But he has to stifle those questions for now: he needs to focus on not losing it like he so badly wants to.

It's pathetic, Venom is right about that, but Peter would rather lose his right arm before he has some horrifying episode in front of his kid.

Miles has enough nightmares. Peter refuses to be another one.

Peter doesn't know how long he stays curled up on his side, clutching his head, focusing on how cold the ground feels, how cold the air is in this glass cell box and how it reminds him of when he was in Warren's clutches, but when he does zone back into his surroundings, it's all formulas and time and arguing, so Peter zones back out.

At one point, he opens one eye, biting his lip to stop his mute muttering, and stares into the worried white eyes of Deadpool's mask. Wade's kneeling right by his head on the other side of the glass, hands pressed against it, looking at him so concernedly through his mask that Peter...

You can't even admit to yourself that you love that lunatic—no one will accept it, and you know it, and you care about their opinion. You'd rather just fool around with him than respect him.

You're no better than those who speak ill of Wade.

"Don't talk about him like that," Peter hisses, shutting his eyes, digging his nails into his scalp. God, he's so sick of it. Sick of Venom talking, taunting, *mocking him*. "You don't know him—shut up—I've never done that, he knows that, *I've never judged him like that.*"

Liar.

"I haven't!"

Liar.

"SHUT UP!" Peter screams and bashes his head against the glass as hard as he can. Immediately, Wade is shouting something. But Peter can't hear, his hearing is shot, it's all just a loud ringing, but the pain distracts Venom enough that Peter gets some peace and quiet. He won't let Venom ruin Wade, too, won't let *them* ruin Wade like they ruined Gwen. "Better," Peter sighs, slumping against the glass. He feels something wet and hot drip down his neck.

It takes him a full ten seconds to realize the warmth drizzling down his back is blood.

When he reaches a hand to touch the side of his head, it comes back red.

"Can't heal from a little thing like tha'?" Peter slurs. Maybe he hit himself a little harder than he should have, but Venom is very quiet now. "Losin' your touch, V."

I can't heal if you don't let me.

"Huh," is all Peter says because he *definitely* didn't think this through, but he doesn't let himself pass out. He's *positive* that only a few seconds go by before the cell door depressurizes and someone enters because then Wade is right in front of him, cradling his jaw gently with his gloved hands, murmuring worriedly about his head, god, baby boy, why did you do that, look at you —"*fuck, fuck, fuck, you can't do that to me, I almost lost my shit but you've already lost your shit, and if both of our shits are lost, then who's flying the plane?*" Wade whispers rapidly.

"M'sorry," Peter murmurs.

"Hm?"

"Hit my head. S'quiet, now."

"I know, baby," Wade comforts, forgiving. Peter leans his head into Wade's touch like he's starved for it. "I know. But you're not healing because of that nasty little bug you caught, so you can't do that again. Promise me?"

"I..."

"Peter, promise me?"

"Promise," Peter forces out, slumping against the glass wall, knees drawn up.

“Okay, good. Pretty boy spiders don’t lie, now, do they? Neither do the ex-mercenaries who follow them. So, *not gonna’ lie*, but this is gonna’ hurt like a bitch, so feel free to punch me in the face—but not in the crotch, okay, I need that.”

“Wha—?” Then Peter feels two large needles stab him—one in the neck, another in the thigh—and at first Peter feels nothing except the discomfort of being injected with whatever Dr. Banner came up with. Though Peter’s a *little* unnerved to note that being jabbed by needles doesn’t do *anything* to him because he’s so used to it. But then—*then* Peter gets what Wade was talking about, especially when his eardrums nearly bust with whatever the hell they blasted in his cell all of a sudden.

He’s sure he punched Wade out of reflex—sure of it, felt his fist collide and bones crack and break beneath his hand—because Venom’s screeching has reached unbearable, agonizing levels in his mind and the—the *sound*? Like bells in his head, god, it’s so *loud*, whatever is ringing so loudly is making Venom recoil in on itself, that sludge curling into one ball beneath his skin because Venom wants *out now*, *he wants to get out, immediately*.

Screaming, yeah, he remembers screaming until his voice gives out, until his eyes roll to the back of his head and he slumps unconscious in a streak of red down the side of the glass while Venom keeps on screeching and shrieking and wailing *in his goddamn head*.

Then he comes to with a staggering inhale, scrambling to his knees and retching all the acid in his stomach.

Peter crawls away from the black, amorphous, mass that’s writhing and hissing feet away from him—a gross black splatter of tar against the white of the floor. Peter retches once more, watery eyes wide when black comes out of his mouth—*god, that’s so gross, what the hell*—and he retches a couple more times, each time harder and longer than the last, until he’s spitting out pink and then red and then definitely globs of blood. But with each glob of blood, more black comes out, too.

He can hear Wade and Clint shouting in the background, but Peter just wipes his bloody mouth with a shaky hand. Sweat runs down his neck in cold trickles.

“Tony! Is that supposed to happen—it—aw, dude, that’s so *gross*. *Can I leave?!*”

“Clint. Shut up,” Natasha sharply reprimands the instant she returns from escorting Miles out. Clint hisses in sympathy when Peter heaves and black trickles down his mouth, tears streaming down his face from the force as he heaves again, more black trickling out of his mouth.

“If he dies, I’m going to twist your head off your neck like a Barbie doll, Stark,” Wade states, flatly.

“If you can get through me,” Natasha tells him, equally flat.

“You think you’re tough shit, but you’ve obviously *never* gone up against an immortal merc, have you? Amateur,” Wade says with a derisive snort.

“Tasha,” Clint says cautiously when Black Widow fists her hands, expression impassive. “He’s just stressed out. Deadpool talks shit when he’s stressed.”

“I’m always stressed,” Wade jokes, but it falls flat.

Peter doesn’t know if anyone actually replies to that because then another bout of vomiting happens for good measure—all blood with spots of black, jeez, that cannot be good—before he *finally* sits back and kicks away from the bubbling black mass, his stomach and throat left feeling

raw and bloody.

For a couple of seconds, it's quiet, and Peter is heaving in air despite the searing in his throat—can't quite breathe, can't quite move, feels agony race up his spine before his skin goes cold and pain seems to dull to a prickle, black edging his vision.

His arms can barely hold him up.

“Get me out,” Peter gasps, and immediately Wade rushes in, dodging the prickling mass of black that's trying to collect itself weakly. Wade scoops him up in his arms and out of containment. Immediately, his ears start ringing, and Peter realizes that that low grade vibration he kept hearing was actually sound, a sound that Venom can register clearly but that he can register at some level now, too. It isn't the agonizing ringing it had been before, but Peter hadn't noticed until now. Peter wonders if he would have been able to recognize it pre-Venom. He decides not to think about it, instead curling up in the soothing quiet and Wade's soft voice.

“Told you no one would like it!” Tony speaks up. “But it worked! You're welcome.”

“Tony, just—get him to the ICU immediately, he's bleeding internally—!”

“We have to make sure *all* of Venom is out of his system first!” Captain America shouts, hesitantly.

“He's *bleeding out*! That can wait! Just keep him under observation for now! Tony?”

"On it."

Peter can't bring himself to speak at the moment, but if he could he'd tell them that he knows Venom is gone. He can't feel its presence in his head. Now it's all quiet in his mind, too quiet, so Peter tugs at Wade's buckles until the merc is tilting his head down at him. Peter whispers, voice all torn and nearly incomprehensible: “I think I left my USB drive under my bed, it has that song you wanted on it. *Animal Attraction*,” Peter warbles out with a wet chuckle.

Wade laughs until he cries and hugs him very tightly to his chest.

But Peter can't tell if he was crying already or not—the mask makes it hard to tell.

The next time Peter wakes up, it's quiet and there's the very soft glow of sunrise outside of his window. He doesn't bother trying to sit up—his body feels like it's gone through the grinder a couple of times—and there's a low grade throbbing in his skull, like his head is stuffed with cotton, that he can't shake off. His throat is unbearably sore so he clears it a few times, wincing each time. Bad idea. It makes the pain worse. When he tilts his head to the side, he finds Deadpool sprawled out in a chair by his bedside, head lolled back, some porn magazine splayed over his chest.

“*Playboy*, 1973?” Peter tries to croak out and Wade immediately sits up, dropping the magazine on the floor in his panic.

“PETER!” Wade shouts, standing up. “Oh, thank god, you're awake! I couldn't take reading that goddamn issue a second longer, I nearly killed myself but stopped because you're here and, also, my suit. I haven't done laundry in two weeks.”

“Didn’t think you were into 70’s pornos,” Peter rasps at nearly a whisper, not catching all that Wade said. He rubs his eyes. “Clothes throw m’ off...”

“Don’t talk smack about the 70’s, alright, they were a golden age of uninhibited psychosis and the occasional good song.”

You would like the 70’s, Peter tries to convey through his expression, looking down meaningfully. “Why.”

“Didn’t even get *a little* hard, baby, you’ve ruined me for every single porn star out there,” Wade mourns, hanging his head. “James Dean, forgive me, for I have sinned. I remember the days when I could jerk off to a ceiling fan. Now I have to imagine *you’re* the ceiling fan. It’s frankly disgusting.”

Peter huffs and Wade whines about it a little more, but he’s clearly ecstatic that Peter is awake. It’s unbearably cute. Peter settles more comfortably into bed, asks if there’s any way he can get more of the good drugs because *Jesus* is his head hurting now that he’s been awake for longer than a few seconds. Curiously, he can’t feel his stomach. Or ass, or thighs, but Peter is too dazed to really question it.

“Press one for comfort, two for orgasms, and three for drooling,” Wade suggests.

“Orgasms?” Peter hopes. Wade cocks his head at him, beyond amused. At one point, Peter thinks he saw him pull out a camera but he can’t be sure. Wade’s crafty like that. “Like, with you or the drugs?”

“Baby, don’t be so narrow. *Both*.”

Peter grins dopily and maybe he’s slightly more stoned than he initially thought. Wade just chuckles and gently rubs his gloved thumb over his cheek. Peter leans into it without any reservation, pressing the button again and feeling all of his discomfort gradually seep away. “Where’s Miles?” Peter mumbles, sleepily.

“Sleeping—well, actually, we’re at Stark’s Tower of Overcompensation so he’s a floor below us. We’re in the lab unit. But he’s fine, a little disturbed, but that happens when you watch your foster father puke out an alien parasite and half their stomach.”

“Wha—?”

“Ooh!” Wade moves on, without giving Peter time to focus on what he said. “Tin Can offered to babysit while I waited for you to wake up, can you believe that!? He probably feels bad since it’s *his* fault you ended up puking your guts out. Literally.”

“Wade,” Peter reminds. He’ll think about that statement later, when he’s not hopped up on morphine and unable to think beyond what he wants to say *in that moment*.

“Miles is good—he’s *more* than good, he’s just happy you’re going to survive this horrific venture!” Wade gets back on track. “He’s not allowed up here until you’re more stable. Your tummy’s sort of...ripped open. Well, it was. Now it’s sewed back together and Big, Green, and Wholesome said you’d make a full recovery because it turns out Venom didn’t *actually* want to eviscerate you so he kickstarted your healing factor into overdrive as you *literally* puked him out. Something about a survival instinct. Still gave us a scare, baby boy, you nearly kicked it for a second.”

“Nuh uh.”

“Uh huh! I was there. I almost died, too!”

“You can’t die,” Peter replies. His face scrunches up suddenly.

Wade instantly tenses. “What is it, Pete, you in pain again? You need me to call Vast, Jelly, and Ragey—?”

“No—I just...” Peter trails off and the world is hazy. He’s so tired now. The quiet is too quiet, he hates it. He likes life better with Wade talking. “Don’t leave me,” he rasps out vulnerably. Wade stills above him. “Just, please, don’t leave. Venom always said—y-you’d leave and I—can’t deal with that. He made me listen to Gwen’s laugh over and o-over, he ruined her but couldn’t ruin you, I wouldn’t let him. I only have you now. If he ruined you, too, then I don’t know what I’d do. I don’t wanna be alone again.”

“You won’t be alone—you have Miles, and, uh, Mr. United States and that sassy birds for brains —!”

“Wade,” Peter’s voice breaks and it breaks Wade’s nervous babble along with it.

“I won’t leave,” Wade promises, dropping all pretense. Wade cards his gloved fingers through Peter’s hair, tells him to breathe because his heart is getting too excited and they can’t make Nurse Stark rush in there unless they were *both* stark *and* excited. Peter breathes easier, finding comfort in the promise. For a few moments, it’s just Wade rubbing his knuckles against his temple and pushing his floppy hair over his forehead affectionately. Then, it’s: “I won’t leave until you ask me to, Peter. I’m in this for the long-run...even if you aren’t.”

And it’s *exactly* everything that Peter has ever wanted to hear.

“Won’t ever ask,” is the last thing he remembers slurring out before he drifts unconscious again.

When he wakes up again, Wade isn’t there, but Miles is. At the sight of him, something that Peter hadn’t known was restless and worried relaxes and his shoulders lose their tension. Miles is asleep with his head in his crossed arms on his bedside. He’s holding one of Peter’s hands and his sweatshirt looks about two sizes too big. Peter looks again and realizes it’s actually one of Wade’s favorite Deadpool sweatshirts, though it looks like it had been shrunk down. Peter can only imagine what laundry mishap happened for *that* to happen. Wade must have been pissed at himself for it.

Peter doesn’t bother waking him—he barely feels conscious himself and he really doesn’t feel like talking—but when he turns his head to the left, the door is creaked open and Peter can hear muffled voices coming from the outside. He strains to concentrate and jolts very slightly when the volume notches up suddenly. Peter’s reminded of the first time he gained his powers as he listens in:

“...keep him sedated until we’re *sure* his healing factor can take care of the rest of the wounds he suffered under Warren.”

There’s shuffling and then the sound of a body hitting a wall, Wade snarling out: “He can take *my* healing factor if his isn’t working! Y’know how much I *hate* goin’ under the knife, Doc, but if that’s what it takes for Peter boy in there to get better, just treat me gently. Like it’s my first time. I’m a delicate dancing queen.”

“That won’t be necessary, Deadpool. But. Thank you. For offering,” Doctor Banner says, stiltedly. “I can see you...*care* about Peter very much, if you’re willing to be subjected to tests like this. I know how much you don’t like them given your own past with...medical professionals.”

“Oh, I *hate* them and would rather decapitate myself with a fucking *ladle*, but I do stupid shit for love so this wouldn’t be the first time I put myself in a super shitty situation because of it,” Wade says with faux-cheer. “It *is* the first time I’ve been willing to get experimented on for it, but, y’know, I’ll try everything twice.”

“Ah...I see. So you and Peter are...uh? Y’know...?”

“Are what? Batter-dipping corn dogs?”

“Uh,” Doctor Banner chokes. “Well, I suppose that’s one way to put it.”

“No, no, what do you mean? Are you asking if we’re boppin’ squiddles? Bringing al dente noodles to the spaghetti house? *Creaming Twinkies*?! Hint: I’m the best Twinkie there is, I can just take *so much*—”

“Okay, that’s enough!” Doctor Banner coughs, loudly. “I’m sorry for even asking! It was out of place.”

“I fucking *love him*, you stupid green smurf,” Wade snaps and his next words sound so raw. They make Peter hurt, but it’s a good type of hurt, one he hasn’t felt for a very long time. He’s missed it. “He and that *kid* in there mean everything to me right now. My life was fucking *shit* before I met Peter and he gave me a second chance at this whole redemption arc thing. Tried it once, didn’t work out so well.”

“Right, because you try everything twice,” Doctor Banner mutters. Peter can hear him trying to get Wade to let go of him.

“Exactly! In fact, I did so well my second time around that I’m willing to let you fuck-heads tinker around with my biology and not in a fun way, either.”

“...The green guy is *much bigger* than a smurf, Deadpool. Let go.”

“Whatever. Godzilla. Derpy Hooves. I don’t care—Peter is going to be fine, right?” Wade finally drops Doctor Banner, stepping away from him. His footsteps sound loud in the hallway. They make a throbbing start in the back of Peter’s eyes.

“We won’t know for sure until tomorrow,” Bruce says. “I’ll make sure you’re the first to know if there’s any changes.”

Peter shuts his eyes tightly, turning his head back to the ceiling. He feels warm inside, *happy*, but detached from the feeling because his thoughts feel scattered and he can’t really feel anything besides an urge to go back to sleep. But he still strains himself to hear, to stay awake for a moment longer. He remembers waking post-surgery, he’s sure of it, there’s no way he can dream up a 1973 *Playboy* porn mag cover that explicitly. He hopes. Wade had told him he was fine...unless he *lied* for his sake which would be something he’d do.

“...still need a lot of *patience* and *support*,” Doctor Banner is saying when Peter blearily zones back in. “They were very *specific* about the type of trauma that he wanted to inflict on Peter. It wasn’t all physical.”

“We can handle it.”

“If Peter ever needs additional help, Tony said he’d be more than willing to pay for all the sessions he needs,” Doctor Banner insists anyway.

Peter’s heart stops—no, no psychologists. He tried that once and it hadn’t turned out so great, especially when eighty percent of his life revolved around superhero duties and a secret identity. He’s sure Stark’s psychologists are private and in the know, but Stark is also SHIELD and even though SHIELD knows about Peter Parker and Spider-Man, he doesn’t want them to know *everything* about him.

And Tony Stark is very good at finding loopholes in promises.

He can’t trust them.

“I said, *we can handle it*,” Wade insists and Peter’s so thankful they had that late-night talk about doctors and shitty therapy. “I know *a lot* about torture and experimentation, alright? And Peter’s no dandelion. This isn’t *new* to me, big guy, everything that dickbag did to Peter is straight out of the Villains Handbook, 2016 edition. Sparks notes version. He’ll be *fine*, he’s been through worse if you can imagine. Just leave him to me. Think of it as a pet project,” Wade says, darkly. “I take care of Peter and I *don’t* hunt Warren down and do something worse than what he did to him. Ice baths and hallucinogens aren’t the end all, be all of torture. I would *know*. I lived it for *years*.”

“Just don’t do anything rash.”

“Me? Rash? *Never*.”

Peter falls asleep again soon after that, worry weighing in his chest.

The worry is still there, don’t get him wrong.

He doesn’t just *forget* what he heard when he was higher than a kite. It’s an annoying trait of his—he’s always very aware of his surroundings, whether drugged or not—and he likes to attribute it to the radioactive spider that bit him, but he’d have to conduct some experiments to be one hundred percent certain and he’s a little tired of being the subject of experiments at the moment.

He thinks about what Doctor Banner and Mr. Stark keep offering him whenever they check in every week—they offered a private psychologist before he was released, ignoring Wade’s extreme hostility at the thought of subjecting Peter to a shrink—and thinks that he made a right call when he said that if anything drastic or alarming happened to him, Peter would immediately contact Tony and schedule an appointment.

For now, he’s on his own because that’s what’s always worked best for him.

And though he finds he’s struggling, he’s also still breathing and still trying, so he considers that a win.

“I’m glad I didn’t miss much,” Peter chuckles that afternoon as he watches Miles whip around the bedroom, talking a mile a minute and shoving all of his exams and art projects and weekly report cards at Peter. Miles is catching him up on every single conversation, every homework assignment, every television show, *everything* that he can think of that Peter missed.

Peter wants to squish Miles to his chest for the sentiment, but he’s content watching Miles

scramble to show him what they'd been up to in his absence.

Wade is in the kitchen causing a huge ruckus because he's been on a euphoric high ever since Peter was released from the Tower a few days ago. Although Peter had spent most of those days dozing, the television on in a low hum in the background, now that he's rested a little more, he's able to actually talk to them. His healing factor had taken care of all of his major injuries so, aside from the stray bruise or two, he's practically as good as new now.

Skinnier, according to Wade, which explains why he's been cooking heavy meals and making sure Peter eats three times a day. But otherwise physically unharmed.

Psychologically? Well, Peter's always figuring *that* out.

"I kept my grades up while I patrolled the city!" Miles tells him, proudly. "Look! See? Wade said I had to keep my grades up or else I couldn't go!"

"Not by yourself, I hope," Peter says, worry tinging his tone. "Even if the suit Mr. Stark made for you covers all the bases, it's still dangerous to go out alone."

"Nope! Wade always came with me!" Miles tells him. "It was scary at first, but I know you'd... you'd want someone to keep the city safe, so I tried my best! It's...um, really hard, but," he admits with a little laugh, uncomfortable but trying to hide it. Peter's heart weighs; he hadn't meant for this to be the reason that prompted Miles to go out into the dark streets of New York. "I didn't think it'd be so hard, but I tried my best..."

"I think you did a fantastic job. It's definitely not easy to do, but you did your best and I'm really proud of you. You don't have to worry about it anymore, though, since I'm back," Peter tells him with a crooked smile. Miles perks up. "I'm pretty much recovered at this point, so I'll be back out on the streets and you'll be back on a regular sleep schedule by Thursday. Actually, *how long* did you stay up patrolling?"

"Just until eleven!" Wade bursts into the room, apron tied around his waist. It's pink and frilly and *definitely new*. Peter's a little sore he missed Wade first wearing it. "Eight to eleven three times a week. After all, little spiders need their rest, right, Miles?"

"Once I stayed up until midnight," Miles blurts out. "There was a huge bank robbery that turned out to be related to Kingpin and *I helped out Daredevil!*"

"You *what?!?*"

"What the—you *promised* you wouldn't tell him that!" Wade screeches, horrified. Peter rubs his eyes. "You weren't supposed to tell him that, oh my god, it's your fault if I have to sleep on the couch forever now!"

"I never promised!" Miles yells right back, before Peter can even shout that Wade *sleeps on the couch anyway*.

"Yes, you did! That's it! I'm going to record every conversation between us from now on! I can't trust you to cave the instant Peter even *looks* at you!"

"That's not fair!" Miles whines. "I can be trustworthy!"

"So fair! I'm recording, that way you can't baby face your way out of it!"

"I'm gonna' be eleven! I don't have a baby face! Take that back, Wade!" Miles argues, but Wade

only snorts and lists the many reasons why he has a baby face while Miles tries to talk over him by making his voice louder and louder until Wade is also doing it, too, and they're both yelling nonsense at each other like the children they actually are.

Despite the shock that Daredevil now knows there's a second Spider-Man around, Peter chuckles softly as they bicker between themselves. It's nice, *this is nice*. He missed this so much. But the city is loud and their neighbors are even louder than before with Peter's amplified senses, his new finer attunement to his environment. So it's no surprise that Peter catches the rumbling of the pipes as someone two floors above them turns on the sink, and he fixates on it. Water splashes into ceramic and Peter's chest tightens, his breath hitching, when he finds that if he focuses hard enough, the water is all he can hear.

"It happened *twice!* Peter, he's lying," the words are muffled, barley there at the fringes of his awareness. "He just doesn't wanna' get in trouble! It's also his fault we only have five glasses left! He broke two! *And* he turned all my white shirts pink!!"

"Lies! Don't listen to him, baby, he's lying! I totally had him in bed by, like, *ten fifteen* latest and it was an accident those two times, alright, accidents happen! I was distracted!"

"*You* wanted to shove a brownie in a glass of milk because you said it'd be a great idea and then you microwaved it and it exploded!"

"It *was* a great idea!"

"You broke *two glasses...*!"

It's sort of hard to breathe now that he can't stop listening to the water, their voices only adding to the roar, but he tries his hardest not to let that low-grade panic that's building in his chest get out of hand. It's just water. Someone's just washing their hands. It's normal; this is all normal. But his chest still seizes with every racing thought, and his heart pounds a familiar rhythm in his ears when the water gets louder and louder—and then his neighbor turns off their faucet and Peter notices he's been picking at the skin around his nails to the point where he's bleeding. He hides his hand in the blanket on his lap. But when he darts his eyes to Wade, Wade stares back, still arguing with Miles but clearly focused on him.

Miles doesn't notice.

Get a grip, Peter thinks reprovably as Wade cheerily ushers Miles out of the room with the chore of bringing Peter some tea. Peter looks away. *I don't want to worry him anymore than I already have. God, what the hell, calm down, it's just water. C'mon, calm down, it's fine. You're fine. You're home.*

"Stop that," Wade tells him gently, prying his hands apart. "It's a good thing I got a new pack of Hello Kitty Band-Aids," he says and reaches into one of his pouches for the box, pulling it out with a snazzy shake. "What's wrong, huh? You look a little freaked out, like a spider nerd who realized his web is gone. Or his beaker. Or *both*."

"It's nothing," is his automatic answer.

"EEH, try again," Wade says without missing a beat, wrapping a pink Band-Aid around Peter's middle finger carefully.

"The faucet," Peter blurts out as Wade is shaking out another Band-Aid. Wade pauses but continues his task. "I—it's dumb, I heard the water run and, I can't," he blows out a shaky breath

and laughs but it doesn't fool anyone. "I can't calm down? I just keep hearing the, uh," he takes a deep breath. His heart pounds. His hands shake. He feels like the room's too small all of a sudden, like something horrible is going to happen and he won't be able to stop it and he'll just sit there, useless, unable to help himself or anyone. "I'm kind of paranoid. Okay, no, I'm *really* paranoid." He swallows and Wade quickly stands at the abrupt mood change, taking a step back. "I feel sick, let me just, stop—stop—get this off," Peter kicks off the blanket and swings his legs over the edge, feeling hot all of a sudden. Nauseous.

"Breathe," Wade says, calmly. He sits next to him and asks, "Is this okay?" when he wraps an arm around Peter.

Peter nods jerkily, breathing hard and fast.

"Okay. Yeah, breathe, c'mon, you're fine. It was just the faucet, look!" Wade suddenly says and Peter's breath hitches, but he's only pointing at some Lego build he and Miles must have worked on during Peter's absence. It sits on Peter's desk; he hadn't had time to really admire it until now. "We totally made that together, Miles and I, we make a great team no matter what that little shit says, okay, I mean, yeah, I may have cried at one point because I stepped on a Lego and lost my entire foot, but we got that shit done *in a day* and y'know what all the online forums say? It'd take approximately two days, *pffft*, two days my ass, Spidey, because we got that Deathstar replica finished in *one day*. I mean, we couldn't feel our fingers after two hours and Miles kept putting the details on wrong, but whatever, we can't all have my attention to detail!"

Peter listens to this intently, breathing easier by the time Wade reaches the end of his rambling. The pipes have gone silent. He's better now, yeah, he doesn't feel—and he's embarrassed to admit it, since it sounds so dumb to him—but he doesn't feel like he's going to die? Like the room is going to suddenly shrink in on him, hold him captive, leave him helpless, like something awful is going to happen and he'd be powerless to stop it. He's always had feelings of powerlessness when he thinks about the enormity of New York and of his occupation as a hero, but this was *worse*, this was *crippling helplessness*, and Peter doesn't know how he's going to overcome this but he's going to have to, somehow. With time, he tells himself reasonably. He just has to figure something out. Some coping mechanism that isn't drinking or anything his Aunt May would frown upon.

Maybe he'll take up dancing or something. He doesn't know.

At least he doesn't feel sick anymore, just tired, which he'd take over feeling like he's going to puke all over the floor.

He'd really rather not puke *ever* if he can help it.

"Okay," Peter nods after prolonged silence, exhaling softly. "I'm fine now. Thanks," he adds, slumping into Wade's side tiredly. "Sorry."

"Ah ah, never apologize," Wade chides gently, tightening his grip around Peter. It forces Peter's nose into one of the leather straps on Wade's chest but he doesn't try to move, finding comfort in the tight embrace. "Panic attacks are noooo joke, Pete, they suck and you feel all shitty for *hours*, but they're not your fault, okay? So water freaks you out. That's not the worst thing ever. Y'know what used to freak me out?"

"...What?"

"Fucking *clicking*," Wade shudders. "Fucking hate pen clicks. Can't stand it. Never click a pen in front of me, I will kick you in the dick."

“...As if you’re fast enough,” Peter says, regaining some energy. He even manages a tiny smile. “You can’t even catch me when I slow down for you, Wade.”

“Oh you *did not* just say that! I...this disrespect for the badassery that is Deadpool is too much,” Wade says, offended. Peter snorts a laugh. “Unacceptable. Y’know what that means?” Wade grins, wickedly.

“What...wait, Wade, *no!*”

“CUDDLE FIGHT!” He screeches and lifts Peter up and bounces back on the bed with Peter on his chest, curling around him like a human octopus and nuzzling into Peter’s neck, sticking his gloved hands in his sides until Peter is laughing so hard he’s wheezing and squirming. Wade is so warm, he feels huge and safe and grounding and, before he knows it, Miles is jumping on the bed too and sticking his foot in Wade’s face as he cat sprawls all over Peter, laughing along with him while Wade whines about smelly gym feet and having *just* exfoliated.

“You’re wearing a mask!” Miles screeches with laughter when Wade attacks his neck with tickles.

“What’s your point?! You saying I can’t look pretty in a mask?!”

“YES!”

“Take that back!”

“Wade, quit it,” Peter sniggers when Wade grabs Miles only to screech when Miles just flips effortlessly onto the ceiling.

“NO FAIR! No powers in the house!”

“Oh, my god, you huge *child!*” Peter bursts out laughing when Wade really gets his tickle spot right under his armpit. How he even knew that accursed spot existed is beyond Peter but Peter’s too gone on absolute delight to really begrudge him it.

Peter doesn’t think about the panic attack until it’s time to sleep, and even then he doesn’t let it get to him like the other attacks have.

He’ll get better with time.

Patrolling the city is hard, Miles had been right about that.

Peter remembers the days when his fifteen-year-old self would think about giving it up because New York was just so *big* and swinging around from building to building was killer on his arms and glutes.

So Miles is absolutely justified in feeling relieved for no longer needing to patrol the city. Swinging through the city looking for crime, finding crime happening, putting a stop to it—it’s difficult work because it’s absolutely relentless. Patrolling was hard even before Warren fucked up Peter with a really, really bad case of paranoia and PTSD. Now it’s just doubly hard because he has to deal with the strain that comes with superhero duties while trying not to freak out and punch someone to death, but Peter has done well so far. He’s kept his sudden bouts of nausea, his intense but now manageable feelings of dread, at bay whenever something reminds him of Warren or the

black cavernous room or the steel bracelets, the water, the laughter, the jabbing.

It's really not as bad as Peter makes it out to be. Really, it isn't. It's weird things about what he's gone through that have stuck to him, that sling-shoot him back to the weeks spent under Warren's cruel touch for a split second.

Like humming.

He can't *stand* humming—Wade hates pen clicks? Peter *hates* humming. It sets his teeth on edge, makes him coil up like a cat ready to spring. He can't stand it. Wade has stopped humming since he noticed how it got to Peter, how edgy and moody and upset it made him. So he just sings now, loudly and obnoxiously. Which is better than fucking humming.

And *water*.

Peter thought the laughing would get to him the most since it was what created all the turmoil within him when Venom was trying to overtake his body but, no, Warren may have mentally exhausted him by playing Gwen's laughter on loop for days when he had been captive but women's laughter doesn't do much except remind him of that fact. He guesses the fact that he *remembers* that's a thing that actually happened to him makes him uncomfortable which makes him feel guilty and angry and then even *more* uncomfortable until his thoughts race in a now-familiar fashion—and then he picks at his fingers until he bleeds, his muscles tense, like every swallow feels like its building up to something—but he can usually snap himself out of it before it gets too bad. That's why he doesn't really consider it a problem even though Wade would argue otherwise. He can snap himself out of it, something he can't do with humming and something he can barely do with running water now.

But he can do that now.

He doesn't lock up and leave himself helpless anymore.

Wade helps with those attacks, too. It turns out Wade is just as good at distracting Peter as Peter is at distracting Wade.

But it may also be the fact that Wade has been spending the nights over at Peter's apartment since Peter was released from the Tower's medical unit five months ago. Something about adult supervision and not wasting the chance to be called 'Nurse Deadpool' ('Nurse Wilson' if he's feeling nasty) but Peter knows it's because Wade is worried and upset and even *more* paranoid than Peter is about being kidnapped again. He also knows it's because he can't stand the idea that Warren is out there, still alive, still oozing with pride at what he did to Peter. Wade has behaved so far but Peter knows he has taken on dark missions for SHIELD to work off excess violence, knows Wade doesn't trust himself to *not* go after Warren if he's left alone and without a distraction.

Peter understands that.

He also wants to *help him* with it but Wade has more experience in deflecting attention from his crumbling state of mind than Peter.

He can see it in the way Wade has a new burner phone after every mission, in the way he doesn't talk about the gap hours in their days. Or how Wade doesn't talk about his assignments anymore or how he orders blank weapons, grenades, other weaponry with more frequency. Even the way his suit is unsalvageable after an assignment and Wade comes home in civvies. He can see it in the way Wade methodically takes apart his sniper rifle and puts it back together repeatedly during long nights where neither can sleep and Miles is tucked away safely in the bedroom.

Those nights are the worst, but also the best, because Peter blurts out what's been eating at him for the past however many days and Wade listens. Then he does this thing with his voice where it goes so *soft and pliant* and he pulls Peter close to him. Then Peter isn't even *angry* about the missing hours in the day, the secretiveness, the fucked up suits and stronger scent of blood and gun oil on Wade. They always end up tangled together on the couch with Peter drooling on Wade's bicep at five in the morning because *Wade has a pee schedule* so he always wakes him up at five to pee; it's ridiculous and charming.

Peter believes the only way Wade will even *let him* help is the nightly snuggles, the way Peter stretches out like a cat on top of Wade and reminds him that he doesn't have to leave, that Peter is *here now* and Wade doesn't need to drown himself in the memories of what had happened to Peter because he's *here, now*, and Peter needs him more present than away.

Wade has pretty much commandeered the couch at this point, which Miles hates because that means he can't sneak out of the room to play PS4 anymore—even though once Peter woke up to find both Miles *and* Wade engaged in a furious match in *Helldivers* so he had to set down some ground rules like, no, no 2am video gaming sessions even if Miles is on summer vacation and Wade doesn't have any jobs lined up.

But. Water.

Fucks him up.

Which is why *this is the worst* possible situation that could have happened to Peter post-fucked up alien experiment.

“Sewers are the worst,” Peter mumbles. He stares down the black hatch, utterly miserable because he knows he's going to have to get in there and find the Lizard. He'd wrecked absolute havoc down in one of the labs of a scientific rival before he arrived on the scene. Peter managed to put a stop to the destruction before the Lizard could actually hurt someone, but he'd escaped into the sewers while Peter had been webbing people to safety, as he's wont to do. Wade isn't here, either, he's on a job since Peter bitched him out for crashing at his place so much and eating all of his snacks (honestly, Peter's just bitter that Wade knows all of his hiding places and he spite-eats Peter's late-night snacks). It was a really stupid fight; seriously, it was the stupidest fight they could have had. They've had worse in the past and come out well, but this *one stupid fight* happens and Wade basically took a job because of it and Peter let him. They *really* shouldn't have gotten so angry with each other for something as dumb as snacks and sleeping over.

Hell, *Miles* had watched from the couch miserably as Peter and Wade yelled at each other. So, to put an end to it, Peter had just snapped that maybe he should go rack in some cash so he could contribute and Wade had snapped back that he'd already picked up a job so it didn't matter, he was going to *anyway*.

Peter also knows all these dumb fights are his fault.

Things between them had been tense since Peter stopped asking for Wade's help with his anxiety attacks.

So Wade taking a job was...good.

Sort of.

No, it wasn't good. He lied.

It was *horrible* because Peter missed Wade fiercely but he's also really stubborn so he hasn't sent him a text since he left three days ago.

Wade had sent him some texts yet here he was, being a fucking child, not looking at the texts because he can't deal with anything anymore apparently.

No, no, stop doing that. I'm just stressed, not useless. Get it together, it wasn't his fault. Just talk to him, Peter coaches himself as he prepares to enter the sewer. *Aunt May always talked to Ben whenever she was upset, that's why their fights never lasted more than a few hours. There's no way I'm going to have Miles grow up in a home where we fight all the time. I just have to suck it up and apologize and tell him the real reason why I'm...so upset.*

It being that Peter doesn't want to become dependent on Wade to help him through every single thing that rattles him, no matter what Wade thinks. Maybe he should have told him that before snapping at him so bad whenever he tried to help...but that's something Peter will apologize for when Wade comes back from his job tomorrow.

Or today, he said he'd come back tonight, Peter remembers, looking at the digital time staring at him from behind the glass of a store. Whatever. He has to focus. He'll handle this and be back before eleven and then he'll apologize and force Wade to cuddle because he's feeling super touch-starved and Wade gives the best hugs and he really, *really* wants them to not be fighting anymore.

Peter *hates it* when they fight.

So Peter takes a breath and jumps into the sewer, landing on the pavement and tensing when he hears running water come from deep within the sewer lines. He's able to better control his hearing now, can tune out most things if he focuses, and it's become second-nature to tune out the usual sounds and chatter of New York. Daredevil had also been a huge help regarding his sensitive hearing; he had some good advice for him. But down here, trapped in the sewers, water drips and drizzles and rushes and the sounds build loudly until Peter is clenching his fist, trying to keep himself steady despite his skyrocketing heartbeat.

"In, out," Peter coaches himself. "Alright." He crawls through the sewer walls, tuning in to search out for the familiar sounds of a tail dragging, of claws clinking against metal. Instead, he hears heavy footfalls, violent breathing, and Peter follows it until he finds the Lizard storming through the sewers.

"Dr. Connors!" Peter snaps, and the Lizard snarls aggressively and swivels around, bearing his teeth at Peter. "I'm going to have to take you in. You demolished that lab and nearly killed a dozen people! I can't just ignore that—you're coming with me, one way or another."

"Oh," the Lizard growls out, swiping his tail left and right. "We'll see about that, *Spider-Man*."

The fight lasts longer than Peter thought it would. Actually, scratch that, it's a *really long* fight because Dr. Connors keeps slamming him into walls savagely and Peter keeps getting distracted by all the water. The splashing throws off his timing. By the time Peter manages to focus on the fight, he's got claw marks running from under his arm down to his hip and his suit is pretty much done for so he'll have to make another one. Or whine at Wade to fix his suit until he gets around to making a new one because Wade has magic fingers.

And an actual sewing machine.

Water is what ends up helping out anyway, in an ironic turn of events that surprises absolutely no one except Peter.

Parker Luck, after all.

Peter managed to shove the Lizard down a sharp turn that ended in a current of water. The doctor had slipped in it, thrashing around wildly, and Peter had managed to aim a well-placed kick to the head that had the Lizard unconscious in an instant so Peter could web him up nice and tight and drag him back out to the surface, where he'd then deposited the Lizard to the NYPD and helped them transfer him to the prison facility where he'd been broken out from *years* ago by the Green Goblin, when he'd still been at the height of his villainy.

Peter just hasn't had issues with the Lizard so he hadn't gone after him. He'd been living pretty quietly in his gross sewer home for years, working on some thesis paper from the looks of it, until now apparently.

Scientific squabbles.

Peter hopes to never get as competitive as that, ever.

So it's *midnight* now and Peter is swinging his sorry ass across New York, shaking off blood and sighing loudly every time his suit tears more and more, when suddenly Deadpool jumps into sight and crashes into him, both of them landing hard on the roof of an apartment complex.

"What the—Deadpool?!" Peter sputters, surprised to find the ex-merc hovering over him. His side burns with a vengeance. "What the hell was that for?"

"*Where were you?*" Wade demands.

"Uh, patrolling? Like usual?" Peter blinks rapidly, thrown. He's making it seem like Peter was doing something *bad*. "What's this all about? Also, get off me, I'm bleeding here!"

"Jesus fuck, would it kill you to *send a text* if you're going to be late?"

"I was kind of engaged at the time," Peter snaps back, annoyance tensing his shoulders. "I couldn't even take a call if I wanted to."

"Are you *serious*? *You were busy?*"

"Uh, yeah? What else do you want from me?"

"You're not jacking me right now, are you? Because it isn't funny," Wade says, flatly. "What the hell's been your problem lately?"

"*My problem?*" Peter repeats, angry now. He shoves Wade off, holding a hand to his bleeding ribs. Peter sees Wade make an abortive move to him but he just turns away from him, fuming. "What the hell is *your problem*? I wasn't the one that basically assaulted someone while they were swinging by a web! Do you know how dangerous that is?"

"I've been messaging you for an *hour*, dickhead," Wade snaps. "Why didn't you reply?"

"What? You have?—Shit," Peter fumbles for his phone in his suit pockets, doesn't find it, and groans. "I don't have my phone on me. I must have dropped it in the sewers, okay? Cut me some slack, the Lizard kinda' used me as a human punching bag for a while because someone disproved his theory in a scientific journal. Your sexts could wait, Deadpool, they're cheesy anyway," Peter jokes, trying to cut the tension he can feel radiating from Wade.

"Cut the shit, I'm being *serious*, Parker!" Wade hisses, and that's how Peter knows he is. He

doesn't use his real name when they're suited up. "Miles is worried sick about you! He thought something happened to you when you didn't get back at ten so he called me to go check up on you! I ditched my briefing to come find you! Agent Hill is gonna' *skin me alive* when she finds out in, like, *five minutes!*"

"Oh."

It clicks to Peter then, as Wade rants furiously about Peter not answering his stupid phone (they've talked about this, he really needed to stop doing that, it's his *worst* personality trait) and now he had the audacity to *lose his ancient brick of a cellular device* because he didn't like taking his smartphone out on patrols, and then he goes acting like *Wade* is the irresponsible one in their relationship.

He's worried, Peter realizes. They're worried, *desperately*, because the last time Peter was out this long, he'd never come back. He'd been deep in the clutches of Professor Warren, drugged and about to undergo one of the most gruesome torture he's had yet.

"Sorry," Peter mumbles, cowed. "I-I didn't mean to worry you or Miles. I lost track of time. And I really did lose my phone...dang it," he sighs, patting his web shooters concealed pocket again and finding nothing. "It must have fallen out while I was fighting. It's probably waterlogged and halfway to the river by now."

Wade stills at that. "...You were in the sewers?"

"Yeah, I *told* you I was."

"I didn't hear you, I was sick of listening to your bullshit excuses," Wade bluntly tells him. Peter rolls his eyes hard, but doesn't argue with him on that; he deserves some heat for being an asshole for the past however many days. Wade leans in, sniffs, then pinches his nose. "Scratch that, you were *definitely* in the sewers."

"Har, har," Peter snarks back. "I need a shower. And a new suit," he scowls. "Thanks a lot, DP, now I *definitely* can't salvage this suit." The fall tore the thread that was keeping the blue on his thigh. Now they looked like some really risqué shorts. He can feel it with every shift. At this point, he's going to pray his suit doesn't just unravel and he ends up plastered on the Daily Bugle for indecent exposure. It's just his luck he *doesn't wear underwear*. Ruins the lines of his suit, not that he's going to explain himself to anyone. Maybe. Hopefully.

"Eh, you'll be fine," Wade waves off. "So. Sewers."

"Yeah."

"Water. Agua. The element of life. Yep."

Peter blows out a breath and tapers down his spike of annoyance at Wade's none too subtle attempt to get him to talk. He's just trying to help him—he has to Aunt May this and be civil, not lash out. He gets it, he really does.

So act like it, Parker!

"Alright. I've been thinking about this since you left and I just want to say that I've been dumb and I'm sorry. Our fight was *dumb*, okay?" Peter starts off, stretching out a cramping leg. His ribs protest with the move but he ignores it. "I was just—I handled this all the wrong way and I didn't mean to yell at you. I just don't want to always rely on you whenever I have an anxiety attack. I'm not used to being that dependent on a person, that's why I thought I needed to learn how to handle

it on my own if I'm going to still be Spider-Man. I felt like I was getting too comfortable with letting you calm me down and deal with it for me," Peter explains, dropping his gaze a little as Deadpool stares back, still and listening. "I also know...it has to be hard on you, too. I-I didn't want to make you feel like you were responsible for my mental well-being. I'd never want you to...feel that way, like you're obligated to help me," Peter admits, looking down at his shoes.

"You won't always be there, either," Peter adds, when he sees Wade open his mouth. "What happens if I freak out when you're not there and I don't know how to deal with it on my own? I just figured it'd be in my best interest to try and figure things out by myself before I got too used to it. Or it got to the point where you'd feel guilty for not being there to help me through it. So I might have...lashed out...when you kept being a dick and not dropping it," Peter mumbles. "Or. Okay. *Not* a dick. *Kinda'* a dick, but not really, um, it's just that you can be *really* persistent when you want to and it pisses me off sometimes."

"Stubbornness is my middle name. It's kept me alive this long. Death is *not* happy with that," Wade adds, shoulders still tense.

"I really don't mind it as much as you think. I was already upset with myself when we fought," Peter states and some of the tension drains out of Wade's frame. "I just didn't talk to you when I needed to and I got angry instead. So I'm sorry. I'm not actually angry that you sleep on my couch every night and eat all my snacks," he smiles behind his mask, sure that Wade can hear it in his words. "You being there makes me feel safe. I *like it* when you spend the night. You should always spend the night," Peter adds, crossing his arms over his chest, hoping his voice hadn't cracked too bad when he admitted that.

"Damn it," Wade exhales after a moment of surprised silence, resting his arms over his bent knees. "Heroes and their self-sacrificing ways. It's a wonder you're all still alive given how much of a propensity you guys have for *killing yourselves for the sake of others*."

"Sorry," Peter says, sheepishly.

"This is what I'm talking about! Stop apologizing! Be selfish for once in your life! Tell me to fuck off and mean it!"

"I don't want to be selfish if it means you leaving whenever we fight," Peter says, honestly. "I never want you to leave because of something like that. We have to work it out together."

Wade stares at him, the white eyes of his Deadpool mask wide. Then he groans loudly and throws his arms up in the air in supplication. "Goddammit, how do you always do this to me? I wish I knew how to quit you!"

"Really?" Peter quirks a smile, heart speeding up anyway. Because he's lame like that. "Gay cowboys? That's how you're going to play it?"

"Hey, Brokeback Mountain is very relatable to our situation, *Ennis*, and also serves as an educational experience into the lives of repressed sheep herders."

"Wade, we don't live on a farm. We live in New York."

"You can make an argument that all the people here are sheep," Wade points out and Peter barks out a laugh, clutching his side when it stings.

"So, we're good?"

"We're good," Wade grumbles, bumping his fist with Peter.

“Good,” Peter says, waiting.

Wade sigh after a moment of Peter looking at him hopefully and grumbles, “Aw, hell. C’mere you gigantic baby,” and Peter lunges at Wade with a wide grin that he’s *so glad* is hidden under his mask. He wraps his arms around his waist and ignores the twinging pain on his side, sighing in relief when Wade hugs him back just as tightly. “You smell like actual shit,” Wade whispers lovingly into his ear and Peter bites down another goofy grin.

“Thanks for reminding me that I took a dip in the sewers. It’s all the rage now, don’t you know?” He rubs his masked head all over Wade’s shoulder, grinning wickedly when he shrieks and demands off, off *immediately*, but doesn’t let go of Peter even when he starts to wipe off his hands on the back of the Deadpool suit. “Are you gonna’ come back home tonight?”

“Yeah,” Wade muffles against his head. “Just gotta’ go tell Agent *Mound...*”

“Be nice.”

“Mount.”

“Deadpool.”

“Knoll.”

“Getting her name wrong isn’t going to earn you any sympathy.”

“Hill!” Wade exclaims at last, hugging him closer as he grumbles, “She’s not the one I want sympathy from anyway.”

“Oh?”

“*Yeah*. I get cold at night, y’know. It brings back bad memories for me, you insensitive douche canoe,” Wade begins, very dramatically. Peter already knows where this going. “Reminds me of the dirty alley I used to spend my youth in. At night, the hobos and I would huddle for warmth. During the day, we’d rotate underwear to—!”

“I’m gonna’ have to stop you there.”

Wade remains undeterred. “*And* that single, holey, blanket you give me to sleep with is a piece of shit! It is the worst thing ever. My feet are always cold.”

“It is *not* holey! It’s the biggest blanket I have, Deadpool! You wouldn’t shut up unless you had the biggest blanket! It’s not my fault you’re six foot *too tall*.”

“It is *clearly* not enough! I felt so lonely,” Wade sniffs. “*Utterly isolated!* Abandoned! Is this how you treat all your guests, Spidey? Did your parents not teach you *anything*?!”

“Given that they died when I was an infant, no, no they did not.”

“Edgy,” Deadpool sniffs. “My mom was killed by ninjas.”

“This isn’t a competition on who had a worse childhood, Deadpool! My parents were killed in an airplane crash and their bodies were never found,” Peter adds anyway, because he can’t help himself.

“Yeah? My mom was an abusive alcoholic who was killed by ninjas and I, as a baby, had to fight my way to where I am today. It’s a coming-of-age tale, Spidey, God, you don’t have to be so

competitive all the time!”

“Pfft,” Peter snorts. He wins this time but only because Peter is tired and cold. “Quit being such a drama queen, I get it! I owe you a cuddle night, alright, now let me go so I can get back home and shower. I’m gonna’ need to soak this suit in vinegar to get the smell out,” Peter sighs, pretending that it’s such a huge hassle for him to *cuddle Wade*. Wade gives the best cuddles because he hugs with *everything he has*. It’s one of Peter’s many favorite things about Wade.

“Hell yeah you do, shit, you owe me six for this stunt,” Wade scoffs.

“Six?!” Peter shouts, mock-outraged but not doing a very good job at hiding his amusement.

“Okay, I know I was an asshole, but *this* was really not my fault. My phone fell out of my pocket. Total accident. I apologized, too, that’s like...two cuddle sessions at least.”

“Bullshit.”

“Three,” Peter haggles. “And an ass grope *maybe*.”

“Can I trade two cuddle sessions for three ass gropes?”

“No. That’s not how this works.”

“What the fuck.”

“Sorry. It’s one or the other. No take-backs.”

“Rghhh, this is so unfair,” Wade whines, picking himself up off the floor. Peter follows closely behind, managing not to stumble when Wade wraps an arm around his hips again and drags him against his side. Clearly he was about as touch-starved as Peter was. Or he’d noticed the wound on his side was making Peter sway a little in place. “It’s always one or the other with you! Why not both? *Compromise*, if you know what I mean,” he asks suggestively.

Peter cocks a brow, unamused. “Because I said so. Now, *choose!*”

“Now, now, that isn’t the basis of a healthy relationship. This is an equal-opportunity partnership, spider-boy,” Wade waggles a finger at Peter. Which reminds him, they still needed to talk about *them*. As in, what were they actually doing because Peter is *pretty sure* he did not dream up that whole conversation between Wade and Dr. Banner. But Wade hasn’t done anything about it and Peter has been busy trying not to fall apart. But it’s not like they *act* like friends. They act like a couple: they decide what to buy like a couple, they manage bills like a couple, they talk like a couple, they act gross and affectionate like a couple, they even *fight* like a couple. But it’s not like he and Wade have slept together—at least, they haven’t gone all the way. Rutting against each other as they made out didn’t exactly count, right?

It totally counts and I still have no idea what we are. I’m not into casual flings, I need to know before I invest any more in this...relationship I have with Wade, Peter thinks with a scowl. He just wants clarity. He wants to nuzzle Wade and not play it off; he wants to walk up to him after he gets home from a job and bring him down into a long hug, a kiss, *something* other than that weird thing they do where they stiffly say hi to each other and then pretend they’re not staring at one another for hours.

“Is it?” Peter asks.

“What? Yes. None of this bullshit *I’m the alpha* talk, alright, we are two consenting and equally respectable adults and we should treat each other—!”

“No, is it?” Peter repeats. “A partnership.”

“Did you drink the sewer water or something?” Wade points a finger down at him, not stopping his tirade. “Geez, where the hell have you been for the last two chapters? We had *development*. We had, like, *time skips*.”

“No, no. I meant, *relationship*,” Peter clarifies, waiting with baited breath. Wade opens his mouth, actually processes that, and reboots in stunned silence. “Because I don’t think partners do what we do,” he adds, nervously. “I’m pretty sure I’ve never seen Captain America or Mr. Stark cuddling together on the couch at night.”

“That we know of,” Wade croaks out.

“Or humping each other until one of us comes,” Peter deadpans.

“*That we know of*,” Wade repeats, less strangled now. “I mean, not to say that we can’t be that type of partnership, if you want?” He asks hopefully, rapidly adding: “Not that you have to. No pressure or anything. Everyone is right about me to an extent! Rumors are great, always have a small grain of truth to them. I mean, partnering up with me, *what*, have you *seen* me? Pizza has a more appetizing texture than me. No, wait, shit, you’ve never seen my face, uhh, okay, that’s a *huge* problem that will take forever to resolve because I have issues. But you already knew that, right? That I have issues, like a *shitload of them*, we can make a list one day like girls do in sleepovers, it’ll be fun.”

“I would like that.”

“To make *lists* of our fucked up traumas? Edgy.”

“No, be that type of partnership,” Peter insists.

“Like...a *real one*?”

“Yeah,” Peter swallows. “With...actual feelings. And stuff. Not that you need to have feelings for me. I-if you don’t that’s fine...okay, no, I lied, that’s not fine, but we can work around it, I’m sure! We have a lot of time to make it work—!”

“What, no, shut your beautiful face, I have feelings. I have *lots of feelings*, I have so many feelings you should see my Spotify account. I have a whole playlist dedicated to my stupid feelings for you.”

“*You do*?” Peter asks, touched. Gross. But he’s still grinning stupidly, though.

“Yeah,” Wade admits, dejectedly. “It was all Yellow’s idea, I swear. He’s a persistent fucker.”

“You’re a *sap*, Wilson,” Peter grins.

Wade waves his hand at him dismissively, like this doesn’t mean anything, but Peter isn’t fooled by the Deadpool mask. If Peter doesn’t keep himself in check, he *knows* Wade will notice his patented Parker Gaze which is short for that affectionate, gross, loving look that his Aunt May always catches him pulling at awkward hours—mostly because he’s thinking about Wade or trying not to think about him so he ends up thinking about him.

“Yeah, yeah, laugh it up, go ahead, but when you see the sweet tunes I’ve amassed dedicated to your sweet booty and pretty eyes, you’ll be begging me to take you back.”

“You never left me to begin with,” Peter points out.

Wade raises a finger, thinks about it, and lowers it with puffed cheeks that has Peter laughing hard enough that it devolves into a wheezy groan. He bends over, clutching his side.

“Ow.”

“You should get that checked out.”

“*Thank you, Deadpool, for being absolutely zero help yet again,*” Peter rolls his eyes, smiling when Wade snorts but takes a look at his ribs with a critical eye and careful touches.

“No stitches,” he concludes. “You’re already healing. Hey, is it me, or is your healing factor less shitty than usual?”

“After Venom left my body, I got an upgrade?” Peter shrugs. “My hearing is ridiculously better, too. Like, if I concentrate hard enough, I can hear what’s happening six blocks away.”

“Bullshit.”

“Not even kidding, I tested it out. This is like, Daredevil levels of sensitive. I don’t know if my strength got an upgrade because I haven’t really noticed a change, but I know that when I swing around the city, everything moves even...slower? It usually moves slow, that’s how I’m able to web around without hitting anything, but now it’s like...I’m pretty sure I can dodge a bullet with time to spare.”

“Couldn’t you do that before?”

Peter shakes his head. “Before it was instinct. I acted on reflex whenever I felt threatened. Now, my spidey-sense goes off *sooner* and it gives me time to think about my next move,” Peter tells him, scratching his neck. “It’s kind hard to explain, sorry. I’m just more in control now than I was before.”

“D’aww!! You’re even more badass than before! My super spider boyfriend can fuck someone up *while thinking about it!* It’s almost like he’s a real person now and not an actual human spider,” Wade squeals, squishing Peter to his chest with a leg popped out. Peter smiles crookedly at the new title, hugging Wade closer as he babbles about the many different ways Peter can take down bad guys now that he isn’t an actual animal. Peter would have gladly closed his eyes and rested his cheek fully on Wade’s shoulders if he *hadn’t ruined the moment*.

“So you *do* go commando!” Wade cackles, gleefully.

Peter’s lidded eyes snap open when Wade grabs the shredded edge of his suit and *pulls*.

“Oopsie!”

“WADE!” Peter screeches, grabbing the torn material of his suit on his lower back and elbowing Wade in the side, hard. Wade hunches over, but wolf whistles anyway while Peter desperately looks behind him to take in the damage. Great. Awesome. “You can basically see my ass —*goddammit*, Wilson! Wait until I get my hands on you, you’re gonna’ wish you never did that!” Peter growls as Wade laughs hysterically, clutching his knees from laughing so hard. “I wanted to sew this suit up, too, I only have one suit left! They’re expensive to make!”

“I’ll buy you a new one, baby, now turn that ass around and show me the goods!”

Turn that ass around? Oh, I'll turn it around, Peter thinks with a vengeful huff, hands on his sides. “Y’know what? Fine! Whatever! Be a child! I’ll meet you at home! But this isn’t over!” Peter shouts, throwing his hand up in the air and turning around to leave. Wade’s laughter abruptly cuts off and Peter feels a thrill of victory race down his spine because he *deserved that*. He’s pretty sure if he bends over completely his suit will tear and no one needs to see *anything* happening down there. Except Wade. But Peter’s going to make him work for it for this transgression. As it is, he can feel an uncomfortable breeze on his left butt cheek and, given how star struck silent Wade is, he’s sure he’s mooning him. Or something.

Whatever. Wade *is* going to wish he’d never done this.

Peter will think up an appropriate punishment.

Peter chances a glance over his shoulder before he webs away and spends the next fifteen minutes snickering to himself because Peter will never let Wade live down his open-mouthed gape and grabby hands.

We’re gonna’ be okay, is what Miles thinks as he curls up next to Peter on the couch that night, relieved to have his guardian home and safe. Peter has his toolkit out and he’s tinkering with his web shooters, moves practiced and calm, as they both absently watch a mystery movie on TV and wait for Wade to return home from his debriefing. There’s a quiet *clink* sound and Peter is shaking out some reserve web fluid, frowning down at them and mouthing some scientific jargon that Miles can’t even begin to deconstruct. Peter does that a lot when he’s concentrating.

His eyes fall back on the web shooters and his stomach rolls a little. But he keeps his gaze steady and his will strong.

When Peter never came back home that night, Wade hadn’t let him worry about it. At first, he’d said something about the Avengers calling him in for something or the other, but he hadn’t left him alone until midnight came. Then he’d called Mrs. D over and she’d slept on the pull-out couch while Miles slept in the room he shared with Peter, uneasy but hopeful that it really was just Avenger business. Miles listened to when Wade and Peter argued or discussed superhero business so he had an understanding of how things worked, of how unexpected things can happen and Peter wouldn’t be able to check in with them immediately.

But then Wade had come back the next day and he’d been *quiet*.

That’s how Miles knew something horrible had happened.

His mom had been quiet, too, right before she died.

And then he told him that Peter was missing, and Miles world kind of...*shrunk in*.

But Wade hadn’t let him worry about it still—he told him all kinds of crazy stories, all the times Peter had been kidnapped by creepy villains and how he had gotten out of each and every one of them. How Peter had friends in high places who wouldn’t let him just disappear and how, with all of them combined, it’d be a piece of cake to find Peter again.

“I promise, Miles. I’ll do whatever it takes to get Peter back, alright? Now, who wants to bake a spider-themed cake to pass the time, eh? Eh?”

And Miles had believed him because he hadn’t had any other choice except to *grieve* and Miles was tired of grieving, tired of being so scared all the time.

He's scared of being a superhero, yeah, of living up to the legacy of Peter Parker as Spider-Man. Once Peter retires the suit and Miles becomes the new Spider-Man like Mr. Stark had said he would, Miles knows there's going to be an expectation. He gets that in softball every time he plays a game. Miles knows he has to reach that standard somehow, become as great as Peter, maybe even greater than him. Somehow. But Peter's brand of justice and *good* is rigid, it's very defined and allows very little room for gray judgements. So Miles knows that being a hero is...*hard*.

There's a lot of hard choices that need to be made.

There's a lot of betrayal, a lot of loneliness, a lot of *hurt*.

It's the hardest thing anyone can do.

Being a villain is easy to become, easy to sink into, to cave into your selfish desires.

Or being a neutral party, like Deadpool is.

Miles is still trying to figure out what *exactly* Wade did before he became a SHIELD assassin. He knows it can't be good, but he knows it isn't all bad, either. Somehow. Peter and Wade fight about it a lot, scream at each other and get really close to throwing punches at one another, hissing and gesturing and accusing. But they always come back from it, always grab the other's wrist when one of them tries to walk away and they come into each other quietly, with mumbled apologies and heavy sighs.

Peter has Wade and Wade has Peter and together they *work*, they support each other, and Miles knows that Peter hadn't been very okay when he'd been alone.

But he'd still tried his best, even if he was scared.

Because Peter already knew he wasn't going to be the best. That's what Wade told him. Peter just had to *try*. He had to try because he can't protect anyone if he didn't; he couldn't make a difference if he didn't try and be good. Peter had realized that he would *never* be able to *do anything* if he didn't try his best to be good and responsible.

Wade had told him all this while he suited Miles up in his Spider-Man costume, while he trained him for hours on end on how to use his suit and execute simple combat techniques. He mainly taught Miles how to use all the emergency buttons and how to radio into the Avenger lines if anything went really badly and he couldn't get ahold of Wade.

But Wade's word resonated with Miles.

Miles was tired of being scared and being unable to do *anything*, too.

So he'd patrolled the city with Wade while the Avengers tried to find Peter. Sometimes, Wade would go out himself after putting Miles to sleep.

Wade didn't sleep well without Peter there, much like Miles, but he seemed worse off than Miles. Closed off, tense, and always on the verge of violence. Miles spidey-sense had told him that much so he'd been really careful around Wade, even if the SHIELD assassin had *never* raised his voice at him—even when Miles got angry one day and yelled at Wade about lying and Peter never coming back just like his parents.

Miles still feels bad about that because they had been trying their best, but he'd just been so *tired* and *scared* and he just *wanted Peter back* and for everything to be back to normal. But nothing was going right and Miles kept having nightmares about the day his mom died and his dad disappeared

and he was sucked into that bright void.

During those nights, Miles woke up at night to get a drink of water only to find Wade on the phone with someone, discussing intel and prices, or on two computers in the kitchen, *researching*. The whole kitchen wall had become a sort of board of clues; all the information they had on Peter's disappearance and potential villains posted there, red tacks and maps and Sharpie lines with a picture of Peter's grinning mug right in the center of all the chaos.

Wade had torn it all down when they found Peter.

Miles and Wade don't talk about that board—they don't talk about how Miles would always stare at it before he went to school every morning; how Wade sometimes just spent *hours* gazing at Peter's bright eyes, twirling a knife, every line in his body on the verge of bludgeoning someone to death if they so much as breathed a bad word about Peter or Spider-Man.

Miles still doesn't know what *really* happened to Peter, like what he went through or why. No one wants to tell him and he'll find out one day, one way or another. Just not now. He just knows it was really bad. Peter goes through phases where he's really distant and flinches at every sound; he stands closer to corners and needs to sleep with the door open every night, and he's hypervigilant.

Miles' spidey-sense flares up a lot now because Peter is always aware and his muscles are always tense. In fact, Miles' instincts categorize him as a potential threat even though Miles knows with *absolute certainty* that Peter would never, ever hurt him. Even when he'd been kept in that clear glass box in Mr. Stark's lab unit, Peter had smiled at him and tried to talk to him, as pained and sick as he had been.

Peter has always, always tried so hard which was why Miles had been so, so grateful for his mask and suit because no one had seen him cry when Peter curled up into a ball and gripped his head in that clear box; when Peter had smashed his skull against the glass, blood streaking down in bright red streaks that Miles will never, ever forget; when Peter had managed a crooked grin at Miles right before Wade entered the box and injected Peter with those wicked-looking syringes.

He had been pulled out of the room by the Black Widow when Peter started to retch out black fluid, told to remain in the hall while they extracted the "parasite" from Peter's body. Miles had cried openly then, getting snot and spit all over the inside of his mask and crying harder because Peter was really, really sick and he had *no idea* what he'd do if he lost him, too; *hating* the Spider-Man mask so much, but at the same time clinging onto it because with it, Miles had been able to do good; had been able to patrol Peter's city and *help*; had been able to wear it and become a stronger person, not weak or scared, but the best aspects of himself collected into that one, single suit.

The mask gave him strength and grief.

But the mask also gave him a way to *do something* and he'd understood why Peter wore it so much a little more.

Miles remembers Hawkeye hugging him tightly, rubbing his back and telling him Peter was going to be alright. He was in surgery and Dr. Banner would fix him right up, but that only made him cry harder. Wade had eventually removed him from Hawkeye, lifting him into his muscled arms, not bothered with the awkward way his arm tucked under his thighs while Miles cried into his neck, arms around his neck. He just carried him out to a guest room in the Tower and sat himself down on the floor by the bed. Wade had let him cry, talking quietly about one of his missions and shushing him softly when his sobs reached a pitch before calming back down to sad, wounded whimpers.

He talked until Miles stopped crying and just sniffled, talked even when Miles didn't say anything at all for a long time.

"Is he going to really be okay?"

"Yeah, he's going to really be okay. I promise. I'll do whatever it takes for him to be okay."

And he believed him then, too, only this time because Miles *knew* Wade would keep his promise no matter what.

"Peter?" Miles speaks up, softly, after ruminating about what he was going to do now that Peter is back.

He's tired of being scared.

He wants to protect Peter, too, like Wade does.

He wants to protect his little family in whatever ways he can.

"Hm?" Peter hums, screwing on the top plate of his web shooters.

"Can...can you teach me how to shoot webs?"

The web shooters in Peter's hands fall and he scrambles to grab them, cursing when he loses some screws and bottles of web fluid on the ground. Miles sits up, rubbing his afro, frowning at the dent left on the side of his head from leaning against Peter for so long, and watches as Peter gives up on collecting all the pieces of his web shooters to look at him instead, eyes wide.

"R-really?" Peter breathes out. "You really want me to...to teach you? How to use webbing?"

Miles nods, picking at his wrist. "I-I wanna' try it...I don't wanna' be a hero!" He adds, quickly, then feels guilty because that wasn't what he meant. He does. He just wants to learn how to do enough to *help his family* if things got rough again. Miles knows things will never stop being rough. He wants to be ready this time. "I mean, not yet! I want to be a hero, but...I wanna' learn how to use my powers first so I can help when things go bad again. I don't...I don't want to watch while everyone else is helping," Miles tells him, honestly but with firm resolve.

"...I understand," Peter says after a moment, his eyes soft. Miles' shoulders relax the tiniest bit.

"Of course I'll teach you how to web sling, Miles! Your suit already has built in web shooters, but I can make you some smaller ones using one of my older models that we can use for practice," Peter tells him, growing more excited as he speaks. Miles lets a little smile brighten his face. "It'll be so cool! You're gonna' *love* web swinging, Miles, it's so much fun! But we'll start with ropes and low walls, I know a place around Queens where we can practice...we can even go visit Aunt May afterwards! She'll love having you over more often!"

"So everything is okay?" Miles asks, unable to help himself. "W-with us? With Wade and you?"

Peter smiles. "Yeah, everything is okay. We'll be okay. We're never going to be apart now, all of us. I know you've gone through a lot, especially when I wasn't...*here*...but we'll always be okay, Miles. We'll always come out of the bad," he says, gently. "Even when it seems like we won't, we will."

Miles smiles more genuinely at that.

"GUESS WHO BROUGHT PIZZA!?" Wade screeches suddenly as he jumps in through the open

window, carrying six huge boxes of pizza in his arms.

“WHAT THE FUCK?!” Peter screams right back, punching but missing Wade as the assassin giggles and rolls to a stop in the kitchen, dumping the boxes on the table. Peter is on top of the coffee table, fist outstretched. Miles is frankly surprised Peter hadn’t jumped onto a wall because *he* sure did. “What the hell is your problem, Wade!? You scared the shit out of me! God,” Peter pants, slamming his hands on his thighs and relaxing his fingers. Miles crawls up the ceiling and towards the kitchen because he wants a slice of pizza. “Miles and I were having a *moment*! You just had to ruin that! Gah, couldn’t you just have used the door this once?! Of course the one time you should use the door, you *don’t*. Why are you like this!”

“Peter,” Miles says, solemnly. He drops down from the ceiling and grabs a jar from off the counter. “Three dollars in the swear jar.”

Peter blinks dumbly. “Wha? But I didn’t...I mean, *he crashed through the window*! That’s an exception!”

Miles just shakes his head.

“HA!” Wade cackles, pointing a victorious finger at Peter. “It’s about fucking time you paid up, Parker!”

Peter sends him a flat look.

Miles just tilts the jar to Wade now.

“...Aw, Twizzlers.”

“Swear jar!” Miles repeats, grinning as both men grumble and shove some dollars in the jar. Honestly, with how much money gets shoved into the jar every month, Miles doesn’t even *need* an allowance!

“...no friggin’ gropes tonight, you fudgin’ cakeface,” Peter growls at Wade as they fight over a pizza box, Peter still muttering threats at Wade.

Miles just sets his swear jar down with a pleased smile.

“Oh, c’mon! You don’t mean that! I had the whole night planned, y’know? We were gonna’ make sweet, sweet love under the moonli—!”

“Shut up!”

“But, *baby*...”

“Don’t talk to me.”

“Aww, is the little Spidey *grumpy*? I know a thing or two I can do with *just my elbow* that can put you in better spirits!”

“I don’t want to know,” Peter grumps, even though he does side-eye Wade hard at that suggestion.

Miles squeezes between them both to grab a slice and promptly shove it in his face, grabbing another just in case. Sure, Wade eats a lot, but *Peter* eats *everything*. He’s their go-to for finishing off leftovers, he can fit so much.

“Nuh-uh, go get a plate! And some napkins!” Peter reminds Miles when he tries to sneak off again,

handing some napkins to the boy when he drags himself back, still chewing on a slice of pizza in his mouth. “No climbing on the ceiling until you wash your hands, either, it’s impossible to get the grease stains off! And don’t eat on the couch, you’re gonna’ get crumbs all over! It’s gross.”

“What does it matter? It’s not like I can tell!” Miles mumbles, sitting himself on the couch anyway.

“Listen to your handler, Miles,” Wade muffles out, shoving more pizza in his mouth.

“Wade’s gonna’ sleep in the same room as us, right?” Miles asks, oblivious to the way both men froze in the kitchen. “So I can use the couch!”

“Wait, why do you say that?” Peter asks, nervously.

Miles stares at them, confused. “Because Wade *lives* with us now, right? You said everything was okay...that we were never going to be apart anymore. Why does he need to sleep here when he can sleep in the bedroom? That’s what my mom and dad did!” Miles shoves another slice into his mouth, looking over to find Peter pink around the cheeks and Wade conspicuously rummaging through another pizza box, hiding his face. Not that it mattered since he always had a mask on, but Wade’s weird like that.

“And you’re...okay with that?”

Miles bobs his head. “Uh huh. I’m happy Wade lives with us now. He helps me out with my math homework! Even though I end up teaching him how to do fractions,” he laughs, like it’s no big deal.

“Miles, you know...Wade and I aren’t...friends, right? We’re, uh, *together*. Like how your mom and dad were,” Peter explains awkwardly.

“I know?” Miles frowns.

“Oh, wait, pause!” Wade shouts, gleefully. He grabs Peter and pushes him a little out of the way so he can take the front, asking excitedly, “This is gonna’ be *good*! Give it to us straight, kid, how long did you think we were together?”

“Wade, what—!”

“Shh,” Wade presses a finger to Peter’s lip. “Your mind is about to be *blown*.”

“Um,” Miles chews his pizza thoughtfully. “Since that time Peter fell asleep on the couch with you, I think? I don’t know. You’ve always been together,” he shrugs. “It’s never been weird.”

“Ooh, he’s good! Observant! That’s a good hero quality!” He grins and snakes an arm around Peter’s waist. “Y’know what this means, baby boy? I can *kiss* you whenever I want!”

“Ewww!” Miles shrieks. “No! I liked how things were before! I take it back!”

“But why not?” Peter suddenly pipes up with a grin, no longer embarrassed. “You just said it was *okay*! Right, Wade, you heard him?”

“Oh, *yeah*, I heard him alright,” Wade sniggers, tightening his grip on Peter. His mask is back down and Peter knows this looks so *stupid*, but they both mush their faces together and laugh as Miles groans and buries his face in the couch cushions, calling them gross as they continue to exaggeratedly smoosh their faces together. Peter even sticks out his tongue and licks Wade’s cheek, snorting back a laugh when Wade presses his nose into it like an idiot.

"I'm gonna' sleep on the couch!" Miles decides, stubbornly.

"I have *zero* problems with that, amigo," Wade shoots back, cheerily. "Actually, if you could sleep in the living room for the next week, that would be great! Do a brotha' a favor and migrate into the living room for the foreseeable future while your daddy becomes *my Daddy*—!"

"No, shut up, we talked about this," Peter cuts him off, glaring a giggling Wade down.

"Lame."

"We'll work something out," is all Peter says, which is enough to distract Wade for a moment.

"Miles, you're not sleeping on the couch, don't be ridiculous! We'll stop," he rolls his eyes at the kid. "For now," he mumbles, smiling when Wade squeals and hugs him tightly from behind, jumping up to wrap his legs around Peter's waist.

"All my dreams are coming true," he rests his chin on Peter's shoulder with a wide grin.

"Sap," is all Peter says.

Miles rolls his eyes at them, but runs over for another slice of pizza, hip-checking them over and laughing happily when Wade tries to grab him. Peter shakes Wade off him when they keep slap-fighting each other until Wade ends up chasing Miles around the house while the kid bounces from wall to ceiling to wall to ground to ceiling.

Peter watches them both with wry but fond eyes, eyes catching on the dusty picture of M.J. and Peter that he has on the bookcase. While Miles is taunting Wade about being too slow, Peter heads over to that bookcase and grabs that picture, looking at it for a moment. He carefully shakes the picture out, dusting it, and looks down his bookcase for his photo album.

It's a really old album but, to be fair, Peter has *many* old albums from his photography days. He just finds an empty slot and slides the picture in.

He'll replace the frame with one of he, Wade, and Miles when he goes through his camera's files some other day.

"What'cha doin'?" Wade asks, jumping onto his back again.

"Is this going to become a thing now?" Peter asks, Wade's strong legs wrapped around his waist tightly. Peter doesn't even bend under Wade's weight; he's carried more and barely felt the strain. "Because if it is, I gotta' lay down some ground rules. Like, you can't do that when we're in public because one, you're two hundred and fifty pounds and I look like I'm one fifty wet so it'd be weird —!"

"Why'd you get rid of the picture?" Wade asks suddenly.

"What, this old thing?" Peter snorts, shutting the album. "I haven't seen M.J. in *years*. I was going to replace the frame with a picture of all of us, but I need to go through my camera first...what?" Peter asks, when Wade tightens his grip on Peter and buries his face in his shoulder. "What is it? Wade?"

"Nothin'," he mumbles, adding a little quieter, "Just happy, is all."

"...Sap," Peter mumbles, and presses a noisy kiss on Wade's masked cheek when he lifts his head up to talk. Peter hopes that one day, Wade will be confident and comfortable enough to lift his

mask off for him but, for now, Peter is happy to let him prance around as he always has.

For now, it's enough.

They have a lot to work on still, but Peter is sure they're going to be okay in the end.

Chapter End Notes

This is one of those fics that could have just gone on forever but I decided to end it where I did because I felt comfortable ending it as Peter, Wade, and Miles acknowledging their issues but also acknowledging the work that'll go into them being better people overall.

Thanks for sticking with the fic and I hope you enjoyed it!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!